Dynamics of Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in Junior High School

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Abstract **– This research aims to investigate the dynamics of processes and interactions among actors in the implementation of inclusive education policy within junior high schools. This study used a multi-case study. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, document analysis, and examination of audiovisual resources. Data were analyzed through the transcript of the result of data interview, observation notes field, and video recordings as well as document, creating idea general sense, data codification, creating themes, and data interpretation. Research findings show that the implementation process of inclusive education policy in schools is influenced by variations in ideology, values, culture, and the distinct qualities of each institution both public and private schools. The headmaster plays a crucial role in implementing successful inclusive education policies. There is no difference in any institution's philosophy, values, culture, and features. Referring to the findings of the studies show that the implementation of a policy throughout institutions cannot be similar due to their distinct backgrounds.**

For the future researcher, it is recommended that further research should focus on policy efforts to improve teacher training, increase funding, and enhance community awareness to build an inclusive educational environment for all students.

Keywords **– Implementation of education policy, inclusive education, policy implementation process, policy implementation actors, junior high school.**

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1. Introduction

Implementing policy education in school programs from inclusive or class heterogeneous gives various benefit academic that enrich experiences and education for students, training skills like thinking critically and solving problems, improving skills in communication with students, building a climate of insightful discussion, eliminating negative stereotypes between students, training soul leadership, preparing student to become good citizen in complex and pluralistic society, and fostering a sense of mutual respect among work team [1], [2], [3], [4]. In addition, increasing an excellent and productive learning atmosphere for all students, not only for student minorities or students with special needs. In an inclusive classroom, teachers can share experiences that can implant diversity, respect, and acceptance toward others and allow students to study the benefits of diversity in learning [4]. Thus, It can be concluded that inclusive and heterogeneous learning will benefit academic and non-academic students comparable to inclusive and homogeneous classes [5], [6].

Implementing inclusive schools is an inevitability. In the future, education management will gradually switch from elitist and exclusive to a more democratic and inclusive [7], [8]. Therefore, the future of schools must become inclusive, so the government and other parties must prepare for it. In addition, inclusive schools are urgent in educating students in need because, in daily life, mixing or interacting with normal society (general) is the case.

Thus, Inclusive education offers early opportunities for social interactions, promoting integration and adaptability.

Every country is currently formulating and implementing various policies and inclusive response agreements. However, the implementation of its policy differs in each country because of the different backgrounds and conditions [9]. In Indonesia, the government has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) into Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Disability and Regulation of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 48 of 2023 concerning suitable accommodation for students with disabilities. Several regulations legislation are in line with the draft. The No Child Left Behind Act aims to ensure that all students, regardless of race or social status, have a chance to get a proper education [10], [11]. Thus, education should be inclusive in the elementary and junior high school to realize the needed implementation policy.

Various policies on inclusive education have been established, but the challenges primarily lie in implementing these policies. Observations in the field show that developing inclusive education policies within schools progresses slowly. One significant obstacle is the limited investment in inclusive education, often treated merely as a pilot project. Furthermore, there is a lack of adequate socialization regarding the concepts and practices of inclusive education, leading to minimal awareness and understanding among stakeholders [12]. Besides that, several socio-cultural challenges hinder progress, including societal trust issues among parents, regulatory and operational problems within the inclusive education framework, and inadequate support systems [13]. Furthermore, additional challenges stem from various factors involving students, teachers, and the availability of facilities for inclusive education. Preliminary interviews with Budiyanto, an expert in inclusive education in Indonesia, showed that although the regulations are comprehensive, the implementation still demand closer examination and improvement (interview, July 17, 2024). Given these insights, it is crucial to investigate the dynamics of implementing inclusive education.

Implementing an inclusive education policy in Gresik Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia, is unique. Implementing the policy at the level of Junior high school and Islamic private junior high school, got strong support from the public and the world of business and industry in the form of program/ activity, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and grants for school inclusion.

Moreover, as subjects of inclusive education, junior high school students show emotional instability in their reactions to social situations. This age group is in the pre-adolescent phase, representing a transition from childhood to early adulthood. Common issues during this implementation include different perceptions between students and teachers. Teachers often view these students similarly to children, expecting them to comply with instructions without the ability to make independent choices. In contrast, this stage is marked by a growing need for recognition of individuality and acknowledgment as developing adults [14].

Junior high school students have emotional instability and fast-changing moods. Common behaviours include rebellious tendencies, rule rejection, less contact with parents, and a desire to challenge boundaries set by teachers. Sometimes personal behaviour is contrasted with standards and expectations found in the social context, which results in enquiries sometimes with scepticism about the fairness and mercy of God in relation to personal circumstances [15], [16]. Problems that typically arise in schools include peer group influence, fear of rejection if failing to meet peer expectations, a love for challenges, and a strong need for recognition. These characteristics make junior high school students unique and distinct from other educational levels, including those with special needs in state senior high school/Islamic junior high schools. Therefore, examining the implementation of inclusive education policies in junior high schools is an interesting topic of study.

Several schools have implemented best practices in inclusive education, including Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School, State Junior High School 30 Gresik and Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik. Each of these three inclusive schools has distinctive characteristics. The first public junior high school designated as a pilot project for inclusive education was State Junior High School 30 Gresik, a public institution under the Gresik Education Office. Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik is a private school affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Islamic organization and operates under the Department of Education. On the other hand, Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School is another private institution affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Islamic organization, and it is connected to a local Islamic boarding school

The Preliminary studies show the unique approaches of three schools in Gresik Regency to implement inclusive education policies.

State Junior High School 30 Gresik follows government's policies in line with regulations, Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik adapts these policies to align with the values of Muhammadiyah organization, while Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School integrates policies from both the Ministry of Religion and the Gresik Education Office, while maintaining the values of its Islamic boarding school.

Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik and Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School have the initiative to implement inclusive education from within the schools rather than being solely driven by the government (interviews, July 20-27, 2024). These internal efforts, as seen in private institutions, show the role of non-governmental actors in shaping educational policies [17], [18]. The result of study by [19] emphasized the influence of private foundations and organizations in educational policy implementation and micropolitics at the district and school levels. This has shown that implementing inclusive education policies often involves multiple actors and internal school dynamics, which can also inspire new government policies [20].

Implementing educational policy is crucial because if it is not executed as planned, the objective will not be achieved, rendering the entire process a waste of time, energy, and resources [21]. Effective policy implementation is critical in school organizations, as it often brings about various dynamics, concerns, and challenges within the institution when new policies are introduced [22].

Various research results show that implementing education policies into action is one of the most important parts of policy studies. It's important to understand how these policies work in real life to help schools implement them properly [22], This also helps improve public services and observe their effect on people [23].

However, although the government has introduced numerous new programs [24], [25], [26], limited research examines the implementation of public policies. Researchers often face difficulties when conducting policy implementation studies due to the complex scope of the research, the challenge of identifying relevant actors [18], the theoretical and normative challenges, and the varying needs of practitioners [27].

Currently, most studies about public policy implementation in education focus mainly on describing how policies are put into action [28], [26], [29]. However, research on the role of the people and institutions that implement policies (implementing agencies) is still limited. It is crucial because implementing policies is no longer just a task owned by the government or bureaucracy.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and private companies also have the same role [30]. Additionally, community expectations, public participation, and involvement also affect the success of policy implementation [31].

These studies show that there hasn't been much progress since the international push for inclusive education, according to Salamanca's statement [32], [33]. Some research highlights how important school leaders and teachers are in creating an inclusive environment. When teachers have a positive attitude, it really helps students with special needs succeed [34], [35]. The success of implementing inclusive education policies in schools depends on several factors, like strong school leadership, good relationships with higher institutions, support from teachers, and the curriculum [36], everyone must have a positive attitude toward inclusive education [37].

This study aims to explore another important aspect of policy implementation: the dynamics of interaction among the actors involved in implementing inclusive education policies. The objective is to analyze the implementation process and the interactions between actors at State Junior High School 30 Gresik, Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School and Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik. The findings from this research can serve as valuable lessons for other institutions.

2. Literature Review-
Implementation of Education Policy

Implementing a policy is an action to carry out important decisions, usually in the form of laws or significant orders from the executive branch [38]. Policy implementation reflects a complex process of change, where the government's main policies are transformed into programs, procedures, rules, or practices aimed at social improvement. Three factors influence this implementation process: governance networks, the socio-political context and democratic dynamics, and public management [39]. Meanwhile, Policy implementation is a series of actions undertaken by governmental and private organizations, either individually or collectively, to achieve policy objectives. These actions involve translating decisions into operational steps over a specified period [40].

Four parts are connected in implementing policy action: the policy plan that has been made or will be used, the organization that carries it out, the group that aims to help, and the surrounding environment. Sometimes, a tension between these parts is possible to occur because of how things change and work together.This process continues until it leads to decisions that can either help or stop the policy from being carried out further [41].

One of the challenges in implementing policies is integrating the macro level of policymakers with the micro level of individual implementers [40]. Therefore, in the education policy implementation process, it is important to build ongoing interactions and negotiations between policymakers and those carrying out the policies to ensure being executed effectively [42]. This is crucial to prevent misunderstandings and misconceptions between the policymakers and the implementers. Communication between policymakers and implementers as well as between implementers and the target groups (the subjects of the education policy), is the key to successful implementation of education policies. The communication style between policymakers and implementers should focus on a more democratic approach (bottom-up), as it tends to be more effective and beneficial compared to a command-based approach (top-down) [43].

The successful implementation of policy depends heavily on the actors' ability to manage different factors effectively. Those who implement the policy need to keep interacting and negotiating with the policymakers to ensure that the policy is carried out well [42]. Finding a balance between pressure and support is essential to creating an effective implementation process. Too much pressure can hinder progress, while too much support can lead to a lack of innovation.

The educational policies often require collaboration between institutions, particularly when addressing complex policy issues. In contrast, simpler policies can typically be managed by a single agency or organization [44]. In the context of inclusive education, implementation may be led by one central institution, such as a well-structured and supportive school system. Inclusive education seeks to improve conditions for targeted groups especially students with special needs by facilitating a transition from disadvantageous to more equitable educational experiences following policy enactment.

Several factors influence the effectiveness of policy implementation in schools. These include the policy's structure, its specific characteristics, the context in which it is introduced, the complexity of the school environment, and the existing institutions [45].A supportive environment is an essential factor as it greatly increases the possibility of successful implementation [46]. Studies show that the context in which a policy is implemented greatly influences its success rather than just its design or content.

Successful policy implementation requires more than structural planning which depends on incorporating the aspirations of the target stakeholders and fostering their continuous involvement in the decision-making process [31].

Research shows that in schools, school leaders need to listen to the hopes of the school community, boost their participation, and give them opportunities to be part of decision-making. This way, the education policies will have support from stakeholders. This idea is supported by research from [47] which states that in school bureaucracy, success in implementing school development policies often comes from involving teachers and students in the process, as well as improving the quality of infrastructure. School leaders should lead efforts to increase participation with integrity because a leader's integrity significantly impacts the success of policy implementation [26].

Policy implementation also relies on policymakers' involvement to influence street-level bureaucrats to provide services or manage the behaviours of the target groups. Frontline bureaucrats, or street-level bureaucrats, play a crucial role in this process because of interacting directly often with the public and the policy's target group, being also the key in delivering information about policies or programs to these groups [18]. There are three types of street-level bureaucrats: those who oppose or avoid the policies, those who remain neutral or comply minimally, and those who actively support and comply with the policy directions [48].

2.1. Inclusive Education

The implementation of inclusive education is grounded in core values like togetherness, equal opportunities, and social and economic fairness [49], [50]. Inclusive schools act as a platform to eliminate discrimination, promote a friendly society, and create an accessible educational environment for everyone. This approach ensures that all children, including those with special needs, have the opportunity to receive an education tailored to their individual circumstances. The primary goal of inclusive education is to establish a system that values diversity, avoids discrimination, and fosters a welcoming learning atmosphere for all children.

Moreover, inclusive education encourages mutual respect and understanding among students and parents and between students and their parents [51]. This collaboration is vital because it helps both students and parents get used to working together in a school setting, promoting positive behaviors that may not develop in non-inclusive environments. Thus, the objective of inclusive education aligns with Indonesia's national education goals, which strive to create an intelligent nation by ensuring that every child has access to education and support services.

This system marks a significant and innovative step toward providing educational access for all students with disabilities which emphasizes fairness, equality, and anti-discrimination while addressing diverse needs through active participation and collaboration in learning [52]. Inclusive education seeks to minimize barriers to learning and guarantees that every student with disabilities has the right to a quality education, which can ultimately help break the cycle of poverty stemming from a lack of educational opportunities.

An inclusive school provides education services to all students including both regular students and those with special needs. These schools create opportunities for children with special needs to learn alongside their peers in a supportive environment [51], [53]. In an inclusive setting, students with special needs spend a significant amount of time in class with their typically developing peers [54]. Therefore, inclusive schools organize educational processes for all students, regardless of their needs, in the same classroom (except for students with severe intellectual disabilities), offering support according to each student's needs.

The inclusive or heterogeneous classes provide valuable educational experiences for students to develop important academic skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving, enhancing communication abilities, fostering insightful discussions, reducing negative stereotypes among students, and encouraging leadership qualities. These skills prepare students to be responsible citizens in a complex, diverse society while promoting mutual respect and teamwork [1], [2], [3], [4]. However, challenges still exist in establishing inclusive schools. One major issue is parental concern regarding the services provided to regular students, including learning support [55]. To successfully implement inclusive education, effective communication and collaboration with parents and the community are essential.

3. Methodology

This study used a multi-case study research design to explore two or more subjects, backgrounds, or data storage locations for examining multiple cases [56]. The method involves comparative case studies, where researchers compare different cases and elaborate on their findings to identify themes, summarize findings, propose ideas, and develop substantive theories across cases, and then make the conclusions [56], [57], [58].

The study aims to identify, examine, describe, and understand one type of organization: first-grade junior high schools and Islamic Junior High School.

This study aimed to examine dynamics of the process and the interactions between actors involved in implementing inclusive education policies in these schools.

3.1. Research Site and Participants

This study was conducted at State Junior High School 30 Gresik, Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik., and Ikhyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School Dukun in Gresik Regency, East Java, Indonesia. These three schools are recognized for their excellence and achievements, having best practices in implementing inclusive education policies in East Java, Indonesia.

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling selected based on their specific criteria. Through this method, the researchers can find, understand, and gain deeper insights into important issues for the research [58]. The research informants included the Head of the Gresik Education Office, the Head of Resources Centre Unit, school principals, special guidance teachers, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Gresik Education Council, the chairman of the Ikhyaul Ulum Islamic boarding school foundation, the head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Gresik, classroom teachers, education staff, both regular students and those with special needs.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were used mainly to collect in qualitative research [58]. The interview was conducted for 60 to 90 minutes for each participant. The timing and date of the interviews were arranged based on mutual agreement, taking into account the schedules provided by the informants. During the data collection process, interviews were recorded using a smartphone. The format used for the in-depth interviews followed "the general interview guide approach", meaning that instead of having a set list of detailed questions prepared, the researchers used general guide for the semi-structured interviews [59].

The interview questions were developed around the main topics, such as how the implementation process of inclusive policies works, the dynamics of institutions in implementing these policies, the role of implementing agencies or actors in the process, and the impacts of inclusive education policies in schools.

The observation was used to overview the implementation of inclusive education policies, focusing on physical interactions, verbal communications, and institutional artefacts. Field notes were used to record observations made during this process.

The type of observation used was non-participant, meaning that the researcher observed without being directly involved in the activities of the informants. Document analysis was conducted to gather secondary data related to the implementation of inclusive education policies in schools.

For data analysis, the researcher started by transcribing the interview data and reviewing field notes from observations and materials such as video recordings and audiovisual documents. The collected data was then read and studied to understand the general ideas behind the information obtained and to reflect on its overall meaning. Next, the transcripts were carefully read line by line, coded, and organized into themes for presentation. Finally, the data were interpreted by comparing the research findings with information from literature or theories.

The study examined credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to test validity and reliability. Credibility was tested through member checking, which involved sending all data back to the informants to ensure their statements were accurate [59]. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from different informants and using various techniques for cross-checking. A detailed, clear, systematic, and trustworthy research report was created for transferability. Dependability was ensured by having an external auditor, an expert in inclusive education management, review the entire research process, from focus determination to data analysis. Confirmability was checked by identifying and describing examples that contradict previous observations, along with auditing data collection and analysis procedures.

4. Results

Implementing inclusive education policies is quite complicated and comes with many challenges during the policy-making stage, which involves the government, school leaders, and other important groups. The different characteristics of each school, whether public or private, influence this process.

State Junior High School 30 Gresik, a public school, follows a nationalist ideology, meaning that this school implements inclusive education policies according to government rules. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresikis a private school under the Muhammadiyah foundation runs the policies which are based on Islamic values from Muhammadiyah teachings, combined with government regulations. furthermore, MTs Ihyaul Ulum is a private school owned by the Foundation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) that implements inclusive education guided by Islamic religious values (Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah), also combining these values with government rules.

The headmaster of State Junior High School 30 GresikGresik said:

> *"…we are a public school, so in implementing inclusive education policies, we follow the policies set by the government. These policies can come from the central government, provincial, or district levels, where in our district, it's carried out by the Technical Implementation unit of Resources Centre, which represents the Gresik Education Office in making inclusive education policies*."

It is quite different from the statement of the Principal of State Junior High School 30 Gresik, the Principal of Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresikstated:

> "*…we are part of the Muhammadiyah organization, and we are under the leadership of the Gresik Muhammadiyah Regional Board (PDM). At the sub-district level, where our school is located, we are under the Kebomas Muhammadiyah Branch Board (PCM), specifically the Education and Teaching Council (Majelis Dikdasmen). In implementing inclusive education policies, we mostly coordinate with PCM, while with PDM we just report that we accept students with special needs. We also coordinate with UPT RC Gresik, which gives technical guidance on how to implement inclusive education policies. In fact, we work more closely with the education office, represented by the Unit of Resource Center, on inclusive education than with PCM Kebomas.*"

Meanwhile, the principal of Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School Gresik stated:

> *"…we are a boarding school institution whose role is to help solve problems in society. We do not discriminate or reject people who want to study at our institution, including students with special needs. In applying education policies for students with special needs, we start with a noble intention to help them, in line with Islamic teachings of Rahmatan Lil 'Alamiin. We adopt policies made by the education office, consult with the Technical Implementation unit of Resources Centre Gresik, and make suggestions from various sources. The government's policies guide us, and we add our pesantren (Islamic boarding school) values."*

Based on the data, it can be seen that in implementing inclusive education policies in the three schools, the main foundation is the formal policies made by the central government, such as regulations and guidelines. In public schools, these policies are applied top-down, while in private schools, government regulations with the school's characteristics, values, and ideology are combined.

Each private school has cross-sector coordination involving the organization, foundation, and the Gresik Education Office, represented by the Technical Implementation Unit of the Resources Centre.

In the policy implementation process, various dynamics occur, especially in decision-making after the inclusive education policy is established. These dynamics happen both inside and outside the school. Some support (pro) and those who oppose (contra) until a consensus or mutual agreement is reached.

Pro and contra happened in all three schools. At State Junior High School 30 Gresik, a public school, the vertical dynamics with higher institutions (the education office) are not too significant since the school must accept government policies. The dynamics are more horizontal among the school community, how the principal manages academic and non-academic staff and prepares to welcome students with special needs. As the principal said:

"... when we were designated as a pilot inclusive school in Gresik, internally, there was a lot of discussion, especially about our human resources (HR). Were they ready and able to teach special needs students? Besides, we didn't have a special budget for managing students with special needs."

This statement is supported by a senior teacher at State Junior High School 30 Gresik :

"*…we had tough discussions about how to implement inclusive education policies because, honestly, we didn't have enough human resources and budget. But in the end, we reached an agreement on how to carry out the policy*"

A similar statement was conveyed by the Special Education Teacher at the school as follows:

"…after we decided to implement inclusive education policies, we thought hard. Some supported it, some didn't, but in the end, we all agreed to carry out the policy.".

From these statements, it is understood that internal dynamics at State Junior High School 30 Gresik are related to HR readiness and funding for inclusive education. Meanwhile, at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik, the dynamics were quite complex. As a private school under the Muhammadiyah organization, the influence of the regional and branch Muhammadiyah boards was significant. When the school decided to become an inclusive school, while regional board of Muhammadiyah was to question the decision and issue a warning. As the former principal said:

"... Regional Board Of Muhammadiyah once warned us not to accept too many special needs students."

Another challenge came from regular students' parents, as one senior teacher explained:

"…when we started as an inclusive school, there was resistance from regular students' parents who felt they weren't consulted or informed, even though they felt like part of the school community."

Internal dynamics also happened among the teachers, as one teacher stated:

"*…at the beginning of implementing inclusive education policies, the teachers were scared and worried because they didn't understand what inclusive education would be like. They feared and imagined it would be like combining regular school with special education".*

From these statements, it is understood that the dynamics at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik involved relations between the school and the Muhammadiyah leadership, the school and the parents, and the school and its teachers. In the end, these dynamics led to consensus after some time. With Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership (PCM) agreement was reached when the school showed increased student enrollment and an improved reputation due to the inclusive education policy. With the parents, consensus happened after the school held dialogue with them and showed that inclusive education could foster empathy and care among regular students and create a better academic climate. With the teachers, consensus was reached after the school provided various trainings and strengthened the teachers' competence in inclusive education.

Implementing inclusive education policies involves various participants, resulting in dynamic interactions during the process. The number of participants is significant and complex, with unexpected stakeholders often emerging to play crucial roles or make substantial contributions. The government or bureaucracy no longer monopolizes policy implementation but now includes active participation from civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector, such as industries and companies. In the context of three schools, key actors in implementing inclusive education policies include school bureaucracies, education offices, legislative members of Gresik Regency, community groups (CSOs), and private companies. These interactions influence how effective and sustainable inclusive education initiatives are.

Each actor operates within his own role, yet overlaps and role dynamics between them can sometimes occur during policy implementation. In this case, the education bureaucracy, represented by Education office of Gresik Regency, plays a central role in creating regulations that inclusive schools must follow.

The Department of Education delegates this task to the Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center as explained by the Head of the Gresik Regency Education Office:

"...we at the Gresik Education Department made various regulations , guidelines , SOPs , etc. So the implementation of Inclusive education policy in Gresik is running smooth . The unit in the Education Department that handles is the the Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center."

This matter is in tune with statement delivered by the Head of the Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center as following :

"...I was assigned to the *Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center under Education Office for making various guide, guidance , and examining the implementation of Inclusive Education policy in Gresik Regency, especially elementary and junior high school levels ."*

Similar Statement delivered by the Head of Elementary Education Sector of the Gresik Education Office as following:

".... The Gresik Education Office is responsible for overseeing educational policies in the region, including efforts to implement the Inclusive Education Policy in Gresik Regency successfully."

Based on the statements, it is known that the Gresik Education Office, including the Unit of RC, is responsible for creating various regulations, guidelines, manuals, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and other instructions to guide schools in implementing inclusive education. The Education Office, which involves key education policy actors, is tasked with implementing and interpreting the educational policies formulated by the Regent of Gresik as the regional leader.

Meanwhile, the policy implementation actors at the school level include the school principal and teachers. The principal plays a key role in carrying out inclusive education policies, developing school-level policies, coordinating with internal and external parties, and interacting directly with the community. As one school principal explained:

"... I, as principal, have become the vanguard in implementing inclusive education policy. We make school-level policies, manage source power, and communicate with the Community."

One of ex- head school state as following :

"... our school was not officially designated as an inclusive school by the Department of Education, maybe because we are a private school. However, as the principal, I took the initiative to make our school inclusive to create a unique identity and differentiate it from other schools. I reached out to Unit of RC for guidance and direction. At first, the Branch Leadership of Muhammadiyah (PCM Kebomas) did not fully agree with our school becoming inclusive, but I moved forward with the plan. Now, our school is recognized as a reference for inclusive private schools, and PCM has come to appreciate our efforts."

The head of Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School state as following :

"... I as head of this private school, organize how to implement inclusive education walk maximum . Students with special needs who are at school can be properly served. I communicate with teachers what is necessary to be prepared ".

Based on the statements, the principal essentially acts as a street-level bureaucrat in implementing inclusive education policies. The principal oversees policy implementation, innovates new policies, communicates effectively, manages supportive resources, and provides guidance to various school stakeholders facing challenges during policy execution.

Another actor is the Education Commission from house of representative to legislate and validate the regional regulation concerning inclusive education in Gresik Regency. In addition, there are community groups, such as disability organizations in the Gresik Regency that is not directly involved but plays an important role. The business and industry sectors also provide financial assistance or infrastructure support for schools to carry out inclusive education policies effectively.

The involvement of various actors in implementing inclusive education policies in Gresik Regency inevitably creates its own dynamics. Each actor brings his own ideologies, values, and interests to the table. For example, there can be differing perspectives between Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center and the Education Office of Gresik Regency regarding budget allocation for inclusive education, as mentioned by the head of the Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center:

"The Education Office of Gresik Regency gave full support for inclusive education, but the funds for the Technical Implementation Unit of Resources Center are reduced and smaller than those of other units. This is counterproductive with the slogan Gresik as Regency inclusive. But we will fight to seek funds from partners, both state-owned enterprises and private companies, and grants from Special Education with Special Services under the Ministry of Education and Culture."

It is similar to the Head of Sub-Directorate Elementary Education Department of Gresik as follows:

"... budget of Technical Implementation Unit of the Resources Center is indeed reduced, but it also happened in other units, especially since we saw that this unit had already partnered with various parties ".

From the statements above, it is seen that there are dynamics in the budget allocation process. The perspectives of the Finance Department of Education and its subordinate unit, the Technical Implementation Unit, differ. Ultimately, the budget is allocated by the Department of Education. To increase its budget, the Technical Implementation Unit of the Resources Center partnered with the private sector and businesses and received grants from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Any disagreements about the budget are resolved and will not continue.

In implementing the inclusive education policy, there were initially pros and cons among the actors, including internal school members and parents. In public schools, the key dynamic is between the head of the school and the teachers. Many teachers feel not equipped to teach students with special needs, while the head school insists that this policy comes from the central and regional government and must be implemented. The solution was to keep the policy in place while gradually involving teachers in training programs focused on inclusive education and searching for qualified special education for teachers.

At Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik, the situation presented unique challenges. The school principal experienced pressure from the Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership (PCM), who recommended not admitting students with special needs. However, the head school insisted on following the inclusive policy and eventually proved its positive impact on the school, which led to the district board of Muhammadiyah support and appreciation. Another challenge was the rejection from parents of regular students who were concerned that including students with special needs would negatively affect their children. After a long and persuasive explanation from the school, parents accepted the inclusive policy, realizing it positively benefited both regular students and those with special needs.

The interaction dynamics among important stakeholders in the implementation of the inclusive education policy were evident at State Junior High School 30 Gresik, Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School, and Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik. There was a difference in vision regarding inclusive education between the foundation and the school in Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School, as well as the dynamic involved leaders of the district board of Muhammadiyah of Gresik Regency, who were uncertain about whether the policy would affect the school's image in Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik. In contrast, at State Junior High School 30 Gresik, the dynamics were mostly internal, with some teachers feeling unprepared to accept students with special needs.

5. Discussion

The process dynamics in the implementation of the inclusive education policy are influenced by the ideologies, values, cultures, and characteristics of schools. Research shows that different institutions may implement policies in various ways due to their unique backgrounds [5]. This study found that formal policies in public schools often follow a top-down approach. In contrast, private schools blend government regulations with their own values and organizational behaviors. Private schools also coordinate with various sectors, such as associations, foundations, businesses, and the government education office of Gresik Regency. In this implementation process, principals play a crucial role [26], [36]. The role of the headmaster is vital, especially in private schools where there is greater flexibility in policy-making [26]. This research indicates that principals are important in implementing inclusive education policies, particularly in private schools without a direct relationship with the local government. A challenge for private principals comes when foundation administrators do not support the development of inclusive education in their schools. However, in the case of one private school studied, the principal remained dedicated to promoting inclusivity, even with limited support from the foundation, ultimately leading the school to success in becoming an inclusive institution.

Another challenge in implementing inclusive education, whether in public or private schools, is the readiness of human resources, especially teachers, infrastructure, curriculum, attitudes of regular students, and parental attitudes. This aligns with findings from [60], which point out that the main challenges in inclusive education are the differing mindsets regarding its implementation, the availability of non-human resources, and administrative procedures that are not fully prepared.

For inclusive education policies to succeed, implementers must clearly understand their roles, as highlighted by [34], [35]. The goals and objectives of the policies must be communicated effectively to the target groups to reduce misunderstandings. If the goals are not conveyed, it may lead to resistance from those affected. Therefore, as stated by [40],three things are essential: (1) effective communication results in good implementation; (2) clarity for the policy implementers is crucial to avoid confusion; and (3) consistency in policy implementation is necessary. If the communicated message changes frequently, it may create confusion.

The policy implementation process includes stages known as policy inputs. Policy inputs refer to the resources needed to support inclusive education policies in schools, such as budgets, human resources, facilities, and infrastructure. This input stage introduces its dynamics to the schools involved [1].

The implementation of inclusive education policies also requires efforts from policymakers to influence street-level bureaucrats who provide services to the target groups. Street-level bureaucrats play a vital role because they interact directly and intensively with the public during the implementation process, as shown in research[18]. Street-level Bureaucrats can communicate information about policies or programs to target groups. Discussing the directions for implementing these policies [18] identifies three types of street-level bureaucrats: those who oppose or avoid implementation, those who express neutrality or minimal compliance, and those who support and comply with policy directions.

The dynamics of interaction between actors in the implementation of inclusive education policy are crucial for understanding how policies function in practice. Implementation is no longer solely controlled by the government but also involves civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector, such as companies[30].The expectations and involvement of the community, as well as political engagement, also play important roles in the successful implementation of policies [31].

To achieve successful policy implementation, it is essential for the actors involved to understand the needs and hopes of the public. This includes ensuring ongoing participation and political involvement [31]. In the context of this research, dynamics observed at State Junior High School 30 Gresik showed a lack of preparation among teachers when the school needed to accept students with special needs. Despite this, the school principal was committed to implementing the policy, as public school policies typically come from the government in a top-down manner. After some teacher resistance, a discussion led to a consensus, and the school was prepared to become inclusive.

This highlights the significant role of school leadership in implementing inclusive education policies in public schools [26], [34], [36].

In contrast, findings from Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik revealed a different dynamic between the school principal and the district board of Muhammadiyah, which has the school that previously opposed the idea of the school becoming inclusive. However, through the persistence of the school principal, the leadership eventually reached an agreement. The principal also increased student enrolment and enhanced the school's reputation due to the inclusive policy.

Teachers at Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik generally support implementing inclusive education as educating students with special needs is a service. The school provides various training programs to improve teachers' skills in inclusive education. However, there has been resistance from some parents who worry about their children without disabilities being in the same classroom as students with disabilities, fearing that disabilities might be contagious. This concern was also found at Ikhyaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Gresik Regency. The dynamics between the school and parents align with research findings [55]. however, this shows parental concerns can be obstacles to establishing inclusive schools, particularly regarding the services offered at regular schools. Nevertheless, a consensus between the school and parents can be reached through dialogue and by demonstrating that inclusive education fosters empathy and care among students, which can even create a better academic environment [35], [50], [54].

6. Conclusion

The implementation of inclusive education policy in public and private schools has different governance, ideological, and institutional frameworks. Public schools like State Junior High School 30 Gresik are under the government policies. However, Private schools like Muhammadiyah Junior High School 4 Gresik and Ihyaul Ulum Islamic Junior High School include their religious and organisational beliefs.

One of the most significant challenges in implementing inclusive education policies is ensuring alignment among various stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, parents, education authorities, and external organisations. Public schools face internal resistance primarily because of insufficient preparation for teachers and financial support. On the other hand, private schools deal with pressures from their governing bodies, parental worries, and limited resources.

The role of the headmaster is crucial in overcoming these challenges, acting as a mediator between policy requirements and practical school operations. Civil society organisations, private companies, and legislative bodies play an important part in the policy's success by offering resources, expertise, and advocacy. The success of inclusive education policies depends on adaptive leadership, collaboration across sectors, and continuous assistance for human resources and infrastructure. Thus, it is recommended that further research should focus on policy efforts to improve teacher training, increase funding, and enhance community awareness to build an inclusive educational environment for all students.

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