

Implementation of the Policy on Fulfilling the Right to Inclusive Education for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the implementation of inclusive education policies for people with intellectual disabilities in Surakarta City. Although inclusive policies have been regulated nationally and regionally, their implementation at the school level still faces challenges in terms of communication, resource readiness, implementer disposition, and bureaucratic structure. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing data collection techniques that included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The results indicate that the dissemination of policy information is uneven, with the disability community playing a crucial role as an effective link for communication. Human resources and infrastructure still need to be strengthened, especially in teacher training and administrative access to budget support. Implementer attitudes show diversity, but direct experience accompanying students with disabilities has been shown to foster more substantial commitment. The bureaucratic structure still faces complex coordination and administrative barriers. This study contributes to the field by identifying the strategic role of the community in policy dissemination, non-technical administrative barriers to resource access, and the importance of micro-experiences in strengthening the commitment of inclusive policy implementers.

Keywords: Disability; Inclusive Education; Policy Implementation

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INTRODUCTION

According to the latest report from the World Health Organization (2024), it is estimated that more than 1.3 billion people, or approximately 1 in 6 people worldwide, live with severe disabilities. This figure represents 16% of the total global population, making disability a multidimensional issue that urgently requires an inclusive and socially just policy approach. Furthermore, the Disability:IN report shows a positive trend in the inclusive economic sector, with company participation in disability-owned business certification programs increasing significantly, from just 27% in 2015 to 56% in 2024 (WHO, 2024). This demonstrates an increasing awareness and acceptance of the active participation of people with disabilities in global social and economic life.

In Indonesia, according to official data, the number of people with disabilities has reached approximately 23.3 million, or approximately 9% of the total population. This figure reflects that disability issues are not only a global issue but also a domestic challenge that must be addressed seriously by the state through the development and implementation of

inclusive, measurable, and human rights-based public policies (BPS, 2024) . Despite this, people with disabilities still face various forms of limited access to the fulfillment of their rights in daily life. Even under normal circumstances, this group often experiences marginalization, especially people with intellectual disabilities, mental disabilities, and multiple disabilities, who are often neglected in public services and vulnerable to violence (Kristiyanti, 2019; Tang et al., 2022) .

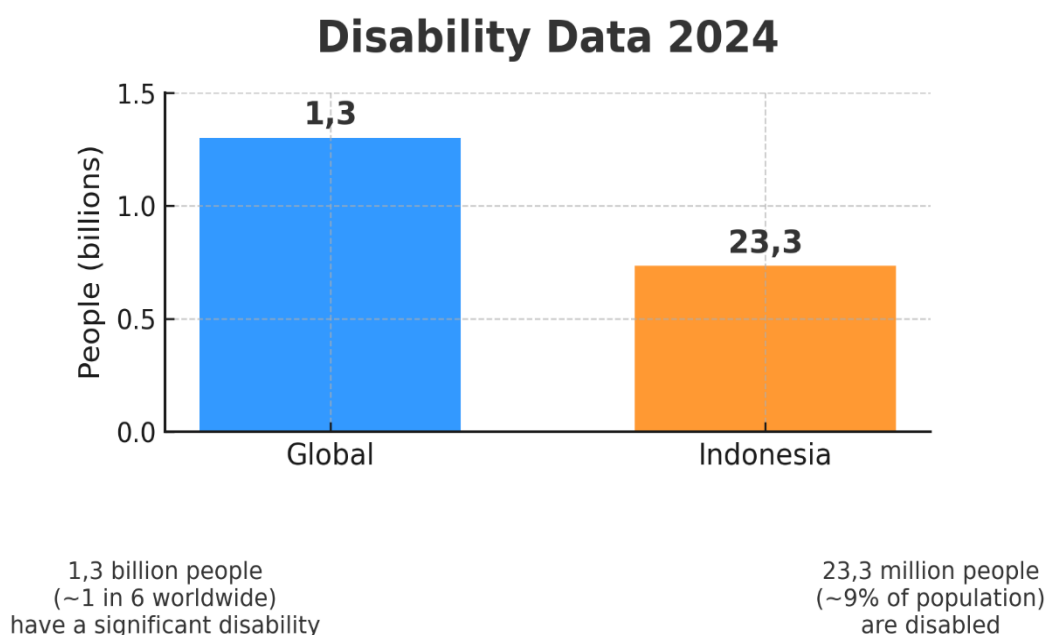


Figure 1. Global and Regional Disability Data
Source : Official WHO, 2024

The issue of fulfilling the right to education for people with disabilities has become a major concern in the national and global development agenda. (Ye et al., 2023) . Inclusive, equitable, and quality education is mandated by various international and national regulations, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which has been ratified by Indonesia through Law Number 19 of 2011, and further elaborated in Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. (Sandy, 2018) . The regulation emphasizes that the state is responsible for guaranteeing equal access to proper education for all citizens, including people with disabilities, without discrimination. (Asbeetah et al., 2025) .

The Republic of Indonesia plays an important role in realizing the goals of the state, one of which is by guaranteeing and fulfilling human rights (HAM) for all citizens without discrimination (Alhosani & Alhashmi, 2024) . Human rights are a set of basic rights inherent in every individual as a creature of God, which must be respected, upheld, and protected by the

state. In order to guarantee the fulfillment of these rights, especially for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, Indonesia has taken strategic steps at the global and national levels (Alzarooni et al., 2024) . As a form of international commitment, Indonesia signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on March 30, 2007 in New York and ratified it through Law Number 19 of 2011. This convention affirms the state's obligation to protect, respect, and fulfill the rights of people with disabilities, as well as guarantee their equality and freedom from discrimination based on disability conditions (Lubis et al., 2023) . The ratification of the CRPD is a legal basis that Indonesia is legally and morally committed to ensuring the fulfillment of disability rights as part of the social protection system and human dignity (Robby, UB and Tarwini, 2019) .

In Central Java province, 2024 data shows that the number of people with disabilities is divided into two main groups: children and the elderly. Among children, there are 13,222 children with physical disabilities, 6,079 children with mental disabilities, and 3,179 children with multiple disabilities (physical and mental). Meanwhile, among the elderly, there are 127,854 people with disabilities, consisting of 80,158 with physical disabilities, 37,517 with mental disabilities, and 10,179 with multiple disabilities (BPS, 2024) .

People with intellectual disabilities face complex challenges, both cognitively and adaptively, which are exacerbated by social stigma and the limitations of an education system that is not yet fully inclusive. (Retnaningsih & Hidayat, 2012) . Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2020, approximately 20.51% of people with disabilities have never received formal education, and only a small portion of them successfully continue to higher levels of education. (Yodchai et al., 2022) . The World Health Organization even noted that around 5–9% of children in Indonesia have intellectual disabilities, but only around 11% have access to formal education. (Omar et al., 2025) .

However, the implementation of inclusive education policies in Indonesia does not fully reflect these principles. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2020) shows that approximately 20.51% of people with disabilities have never received education, and only a small proportion of them have access to primary and secondary education. People with intellectual disabilities are one of the most marginalized groups due to adaptive limitations and a less than fully supportive social environment.

Surakarta City is one of the regions with a strong commitment to realizing a disability-friendly city (Purnamasari, 2021) . Through Regional Regulation Number 9 of 2020 concerning the Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the city

government emphasized the need for a multisectoral approach to fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities (Insani et al., 2021) . In the context of education, this regulation emphasizes the importance of providing inclusive education services that are adaptive to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities (Hapsari & Hartiani, 2019) .

Surakarta's uniqueness lies not only in the institutional commitment of the local government, but also in the formation of the Regional Disability Committee (KDD), which plays a strategic role as a non-state actor in advocating, monitoring, and assisting in the implementation of disability policies in a participatory manner. The Surakarta KDD has played a crucial role in encouraging the involvement of persons with disabilities in the process of policy formulation and oversight. However, practice in the field shows that various structural and non-structural barriers still hamper the effectiveness of inclusive education policies, particularly for persons with intellectual disabilities (Bellaputri et al., 2022; Irawan, 2023).

Previous literature indicates that various challenges in implementing inclusive education policies include limited budgets, inadequate educational facilities and infrastructure, and a lack of educators trained to handle students with special needs. Research (Nanda & Herawati, 2021) notes that the implementation of inclusive education in various regions still faces serious obstacles, such as limited budgets, incompetent educators, and discriminatory attitudes from the surrounding community. Research conducted by (Arimuko, 2020) states that although the City of Surakarta has regulations regarding disability rights, their implementation is not optimal, especially in public service sectors such as transportation and education.

Research by (Pudyatmoko & Dewi, 2017) also emphasized that despite regional budgeting that favors people with disabilities, in practice there is still an imbalance between policy and implementation on the ground. On the other hand, research by (Susanto & Sudiro, 2018) shows that the availability of disability-friendly public facilities in Surakarta City has not fully considered the comfort and safety aspects, especially for people with intellectual disabilities.

Scientific studies specifically focusing on the dynamics of implementing inclusive education policies for people with intellectual disabilities are still very limited. Most research tends to be generalized to disability issues, or only focuses on physical aspects such as the accessibility of public facilities. Furthermore, the participation of non-state actors, such as the

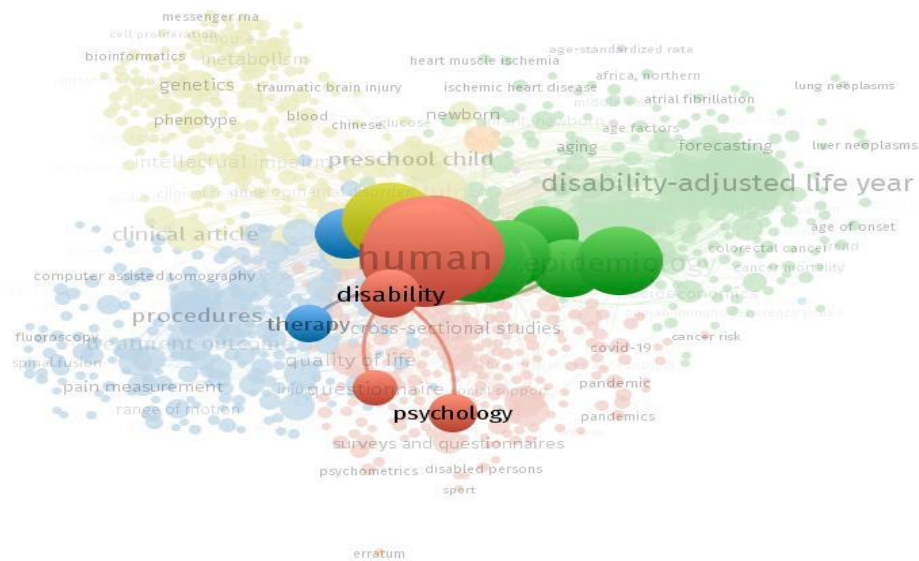


Figure 3. Network Strength of the keywords “Disability”, Inclusive Education”, Policy Implementation” by Scopus Database

Source: VosViewer, 2025

Based on the results, Figure 2 represents the entire keyword network. Furthermore, Figure 3 shows no correlation between the keywords "Disability," "Inclusive Education," and "Policy Implementation." Furthermore, no nodes appear. These analysis results indicate a novelty that researchers will examine in this study (Arruda et al., 2022; Oyewola & Dada, 2022; Selçuk, 2024) .

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach to deeply explore the dynamics of implementing inclusive education policies for people with intellectual disabilities. It is based on a post-positivist paradigm that seeks to understand phenomena in their natural context, with the researcher as the key instrument (Sugiyono, 2022) . Through this approach, the data generated consists of descriptive words and narratives that explain social phenomena from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2018) .

The informant selection technique used purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on specific considerations that are relevant and support the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019; Suharsimi, 1998) . Informants were chosen for their direct experience, active involvement, and deep knowledge of inclusive education rights. Criteria included: 1) Involved in advocacy and implementation of inclusive education policies, and 2) experience or strategic roles in organizations or communities addressing intellectual disability in Surakarta City.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The interviews were semi-structured to allow informants to freely express their views and experiences in a narrative and contextual manner (Sugiyono, 2022; Suharsimi, 1998). Data analysis was then conducted (Miles et al., 2014), involving data reduction, presentation, and drawing of conclusions/verification. Validity was ensured using source and method triangulation, member checks with key informants (Creswell, 2018) reinforced by implementation theory (Edwards & III, 1980), which highlights communication, resources, implementer disposition, and bureaucratic structure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy for People with Intellectual Disabilities in Surakarta City

This study identifies the results of inclusive education policy implementation by referring to the four main dimensions of the policy implementation model (Edwards & III, 1980): communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. These four aspects are analyzed based on in-depth interviews with four key informants who play an active role in inclusive education issues in Surakarta City.

1. Communication

Policy communication is a key foundation for ensuring a unified and comprehensive understanding among implementing actors. In the context of inclusive education in Surakarta City, communication still faces numerous barriers, particularly in conveying information to all stakeholders. The Informant with Initial SS revealed that:

"Some schools and teachers already understand and comprehend it, but many are still confused about the rules regarding inclusive education. Sometimes the information only reaches the principal; teachers aren't aware, let alone parents. So, I think communication about this policy is still uneven and hasn't reached all parties who should know."

Then SA added that:

"The department has made efforts to disseminate information, but I believe it hasn't been disseminated evenly. Sometimes information only reaches the principal, but isn't passed on to the teachers. Some schools aren't even aware that they are inclusive schools. This shows that information distribution is still not systematic."

From the perspective of parents and the community, YS stated:

"Information is available but not comprehensively disseminated. Many parents learn about inclusive policies only after joining communities like POTADS. Government outreach remains uneven, and not all teachers fully understand inclusion; often, only the principal is informed."

These results show a lack of vertical communication in schools, with inclusive policy information not reaching all teachers or parents, causing misunderstandings. Many inclusive

schools lack clear role understanding, leading to poor readiness. Communities serve as more effective information hubs than local governments, exposing weak outreach and risking parents outside disability communities losing educational rights. There is also no integrated communication between education and social sectors, and low policy literacy, resulting in fragmented implementation. Thus, communication in the implementation of inclusive education in Surakarta City remains sporadic, tends to be top-down, and lacks an accompanying empowering horizontal communication strategy. This ineffectiveness directly contributes to resistance, unpreparedness, and policy fragmentation on the ground.

2. Resources

The availability and capability of resources are essential for effective policy implementation. In Surakarta City, resource constraints include a limited number of trained teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and an uneven distribution of the inclusive education budget. SS said:

" Unfortunately, the number of special education teachers is still minimal. Many regular teachers lack training to teach children with intellectual disabilities. Increasing both the number and capacity of teachers is needed for proper education."

Informant YS pays special attention to the learning facilities aspect:

"Many schools have basic physical access like ramps, but lack adapted learning spaces and methods such as quiet study areas, visual aids, or flexible schedules, which are rarely available for children with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools."

Informant AW strengthened the findings by saying:

"Accessibility features like ramps exist in some schools, but learning aids and classroom adjustments remain minimal. Children with intellectual disabilities need calmer, more visual, and flexible environments, which are rare in mainstream schools."

The findings reveal a clear skills gap between policy demands and classroom capacity, as regular teachers often lack the competencies and guidance needed to support students with intellectual disabilities who require individualized approaches. While resources tend to focus on physical accessibility, substantive elements of inclusive teaching, such as calm learning environments, visual aids, and flexible schedules, are largely absent, reflecting the limited adoption of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Coupled with insufficiently trained staff, uneven budget distribution, and complex, non-transparent procedures, these conditions hinder schools from adapting to diverse student needs and discourage proactive implementation of inclusive programs.

3. Disposition (Attitude of the Implementer)

The disposition of policy implementers is a crucial indicator of the seriousness and commitment of field actors in implementing inclusive education policies. This study found that the attitudes of implementers in Surakarta City varied from enthusiastic to passive and resistant. SS explained:

"Their attitudes vary. Some are open and enthusiastic, but others feel reluctant. Usually, those who have never worked with children with disabilities will feel hesitant, afraid of making mistakes, or feel inadequate. But I don't blame them, because the system simply doesn't provide adequate support. With training and mentoring, I'm sure their attitudes could be more positive."

SA also said the same thing:

"Some support inclusive education, but others hesitate or indirectly oppose it due to fear or lack of skills. Principals are often unsure how to start. Training and open discussion can help overcome this hesitation."

YS also revealed a more subtle form of resistance from policy implementers:

"Support varies; some are open and willing, while others decline due to lack of readiness or mentorship. Fear of ineffective implementation calls for a more humane, supportive approach rather than just top-down orders."

AW emphasized the importance of creating positive experiences as a means of building commitment:

"Some show strong commitment, usually from direct interaction with children with disabilities. Creating spaces for such interaction is key to building awareness and confidence in inclusive education."

Based on this, it can be concluded that direct experience with children with intellectual disabilities significantly shapes the empathy and commitment of practitioners. In contrast, those without such experience are often hesitant due to fear of using inappropriate teaching methods. A lack of confidence and technical resources prevents many people from taking the initiative, even when legally required to implement inclusive policies. As a result, implementation is highly dependent on schools' internal readiness; without training and technical support, passive resistance emerges, leading to ineffective policy implementation.

Therefore, building positive attitudes requires an experience-based approach, as well as practical guidance. Top-down instructions alone are not enough without shared learning spaces and concrete evidence in the field that inclusive education is not only possible but also meaningful. Commitment cannot be forced; it must be cultivated through a consistent and participatory process.

4. Bureaucratic Structure

A clear and responsive bureaucratic structure is essential for smooth coordination, effective resource allocation, and swift decision-making in inclusive education policies.

However, this study shows that the existing structure in Surakarta City is not yet fully functional and well-coordinated. SS said:

"The structural pathway exists, but implementation is hindered by poor coordination between the Education Office, schools, and communities. Each often acts independently, lacking an integrated system, causing confusion and uncertainty."

From a community perspective, YS conveys a similar reality:

"While the policy structure exists, coordination in practice is confusing. Schools often don't know where to seek help, and communities must search for solutions. Coordination needs improvement and clarity."

AW explained further about structural barriers of a technical nature:

"A coordination structure has begun to be established, but the process isn't yet smooth. Confusion often persists at the school level about where to report or seek assistance. We hope that in the future, there will be a clear and easily accessible cross-sectoral support system for all parties involved."

Based on the interview results, the absence of a structured and transparent coordination system between institutions hinders schools that wish to implement inclusive programs due to unclear channels of assistance. Weak inter-agency coordination slows down case resolution, potentially harms students, and reflects a sectoral bureaucracy where units operate independently without integration. This complexity burdens administration, delays decision-making, and challenges both schools and the disability community in coordinating with the government. These issues highlight the urgent need to strengthen inclusive bureaucratic structures and proactive public services, as bureaucratic complexity significantly hinders the implementation of legally supported inclusive policies, resulting in stagnant participation.

Overall, the bureaucratic structure involved in implementing inclusive education policies in Surakarta City still faces various systemic obstacles. The lack of applicable standard operating procedures (SOPs), confusing coordination flows, and lengthy administrative processes have rendered the policy ineffective. Strengthening adaptive and responsive institutions is a pressing need to achieve transformative educational inclusion.

Analysis of the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy for People with Intellectual Disabilities in Surakarta City

Communication of the Surakarta Education Office regarding Inclusive Schools

Communication of inclusive education policies in Surakarta remains uneven, with information often stopping at principals and not reaching teachers or parents. This supports Arimuko (Arimuko, 2020) , which state that although Surakarta City has inclusive regulations,

their implementation is suboptimal due to weak communication and the involvement of technical actors in schools.

A key novelty, however, is the role of communities like POTADS and KDD as more effective communication nodes than formal channels, showing that implementation relies not only on vertical bureaucracy but also on adaptive non-state actors. The findings further challenge the assumption that more regulations improve communication, as policies without systemic design risk failing in practice.

Inclusive Education Resources in Surakarta Public Schools

The availability of human resources and infrastructure remains a significant weakness. Special education teachers are severely limited, and most regular teachers have not received adequate training. This finding aligns with a study (Nanda & Herawati, 2021) , which noted that the implementation of inclusive education faces serious obstacles in terms of teacher competency and limited facilities.

This study adds that many inclusive public schools lack awareness of aid procedures and specific budget allocations, highlighting administrative access to resources as a new, understudied barrier in inclusive education implementation, especially at the local government level.

Disposition of Teachers and Principals towards Children with Intellectual Disabilities

The attitudes of school-level policy implementers are crucial to the success of inclusive education. This research shows that teachers and principals with direct experience and mentoring of students with intellectual disabilities display greater openness and empathy. This finding strengthens the argument (Retnaningsih & Hidayat, 2012) , that the skills and personal attitudes of implementers are more decisive than mere formal policies. However, this study also refines this view by showing that implementer resistance tends to be passive. They don't explicitly refuse, but convey their unpreparedness through administrative or technical reasons. This subtle pattern of resistance has not been widely highlighted in previous research.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that micro-success experiences in caring for children with disabilities are a crucial factor in shaping positive dispositions among implementers. This is a novel insight that expands the discourse on implementer dispositions from merely individual motivation to an institutional learning factor.

Implementation Structure and Coordination Flow in Surakarta City

The bureaucratic structure involved in implementing inclusive education policies still faces serious obstacles, particularly in cross-sector coordination and inefficient administrative processes. This finding is consistent with a study (Susanto & Sudiro, 2018) , which highlighted the weak policy infrastructure for people with disabilities in Surakarta City.

This study identified obstacles, including the lack of a single complaint center and the absence of technical guidelines, at schools. Lengthy, overlapping bureaucracy causes administrative fatigue, indicating weak institutional structures and unfriendly procedures. It highlights that effective inclusive education bureaucracy requires swift, adaptive, and supportive systems at the micro level, a novel contribution of this study. Information is available, but it is not comprehensively disseminated. Many parents learn about inclusive policies only after joining communities like POTADS. Government outreach remains uneven, and not all teachers fully understand inclusion; often, only the principal is informed.

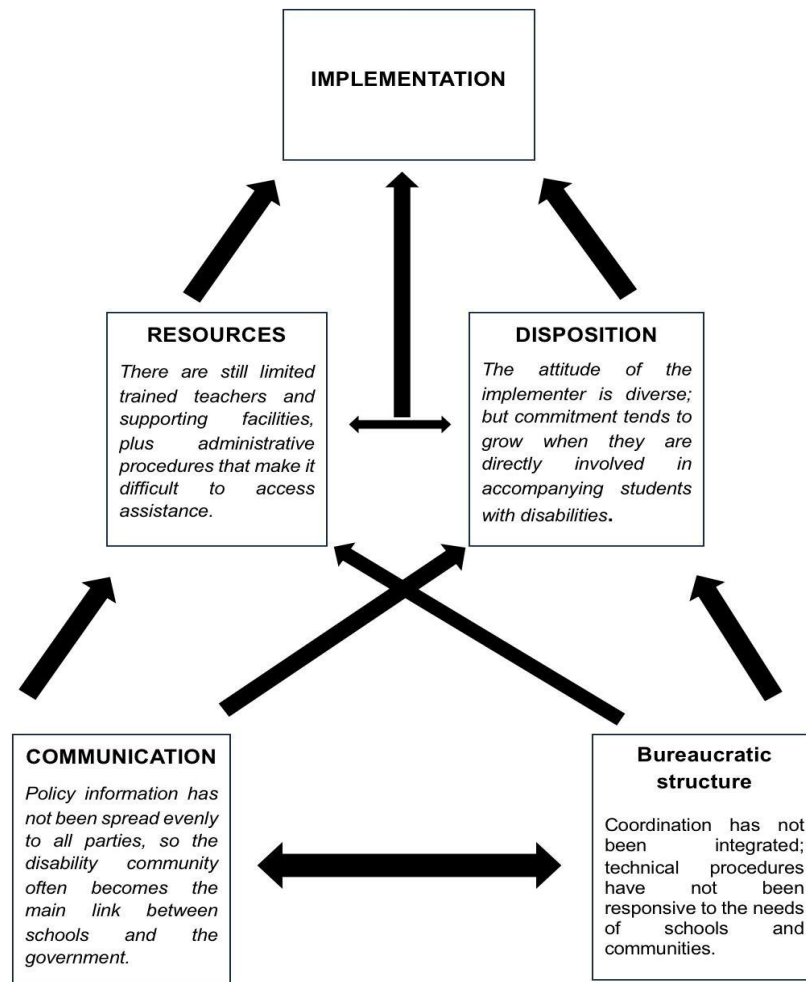


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework for Implementing Inclusive Education Policy for People with Intellectual Disabilities in Surakarta City

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Figure 4. Represents four key indicators in the implementation of inclusive education policies based on the Edwards III model. Each indicator demonstrates interrelated aspects that influence the effectiveness of the policy at the implementation level. Communication gaps impact the readiness of resources and the disposition of implementers, which ultimately influence the efficacy of bureaucratic coordination. This pattern emphasizes that successful implementation is determined not only by the existence of the policy but also by the quality of communication, readiness of resources, attitudes of the implementers, and adaptive bureaucratic support.

CONCLUSIONS

The research findings show that the implementation of inclusive education policies in Surakarta City still faces challenges in four main aspects: 1) communication, which remains uneven and often does not reach teachers and parents, although disability communities serve as effective grassroots communication nodes; 2) resources, where teacher competencies and learning resources are still limited, and access to administrative and technical support is insufficient; 3) disposition, which school policy implementers increasingly embrace inclusion, especially after direct experience with students with disabilities, particularly after direct experience in assisting students with disabilities; and 4) bureaucratic structure, where inter-agency coordination exists but requires strengthening for more efficient service delivery. The study also highlights three novelties: the strategic role of communities in communication, the importance of administrative access to resources, and the influence of direct experience in shaping implementers' commitment.

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