


Chapter 9

Reaching the Marginalized: Saving Disadvantaged Children Through Inclusive Education Policies in Indonesian Basic Education


Amirul Mukminin

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6806-1315>
Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Lenny Marzulina

*Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah,
Palembang, Indonesia*


Kasinyo Harto

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0002-3065-6046>
*Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah,
Palembang, Indonesia*

Riskazt Ziqrand Amir

Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia

Dian Erlina

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5319-1662>
*Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah,
Palembang, Indonesia*


Fridiyanto Fridiyanto

*UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi,
Jambi, Indonesia*

Marzul Hidayat

Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Dairabi Kamil

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7240-8468>
*Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci,
Indonesia*

Sunda Ariana

Universitas Bina Darma, Indonesia

Ainur Abdrazakova

SDU University, Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an examination of the inclusive education policies for marginalized children in Indonesia. Millions of poor, remote, disabled, and ethnic minority children continue to suffer from systemic barriers despite constitutional guarantees. Through policy analysis and empirical research, the evolution of inclusive education policies from segregated to inclusive models, structural barriers, economic barriers, cultural barriers, and pedagogical barriers will be examined. The effectiveness of strategies such as BOS funding, teacher training, and curriculum modification will also be analyzed. The major barriers identified in the study will be resource constraints, teacher competency, discriminatory mindsets, and lack of coordination. Some effective strategies have been commitment from leadership, engagement with communities, and inter-sectoral collaboration. This study provides analytical frameworks for effective inclusive education for the most marginalized children in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The right to education is a fundamental human right that is essential for the sustenance of human dignity, social inclusiveness, and democratic citizenship (UNESCO, 2023). Although the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia recognizes the right to education for every Indonesian citizen, a significant educational gap is evident among the heterogeneous population of the country. Millions of out-of-school children come from disadvantaged groups among the Indonesian citizenry who face various barriers to accessing their right to education (World Bank, 2023). Indonesia is a unique country with a unique geographical configuration of 17,000 islands, extreme geographical diversity, over 300 ethnic groups, and 700 languages spoken (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2023).

The geographical configuration of a diverse population poses a unique educational equity problem. A wide educational divide persists between the heterogeneous citizenry of Indonesia. Indonesia is a country with a heterogeneous population. A wide educational divide persists between the urban and rural, as well as the affluent and underprivileged sections of the citizenry of Indonesia (Fiharsono et al., 2025; Judijanto, 2025). Although the country has achieved a high percentage of primary education enrollment at the rate of 97%, a wide educational divide persists between the underprivileged sections of the citizenry of Indonesia (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2023).

Children with disabilities experience a more severe degree of exclusion from formal education systems, with nearly 30 percent of children with disabilities not having access to education, with those attending school experiencing underserved

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