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Assessing the Equity of Educational Access in the Prabowo Administration Era: Policy Analysis and Alternative Solutions Toward Inclusive Education in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *Equitable access to education is a fundamental prerequisite for human capital development and social justice in Indonesia. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of education equity policies under the administration of President Prabowo Subianto, focusing on programs such as Sekolah Rakyat, the Indonesia Smart Program (PIP), and the Frontline Teacher and School Initiatives (GGD/SGD).* ***Method:*** *Employing a qualitative approach through library research, the study systematically reviews secondary data from scholarly literature published in the last five years, government policy documents, and reports from national and international institutions, including UNICEF and UNESCO. The analysis was conducted through thematic coding, synthesis of findings, and evaluative assessment using an input–output–outcome framework.* ***Results:*** *The findings reveal that affirmative programs have significantly expanded access to education, particularly in frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped (3T) regions, as well as for marginalized groups. However, persistent challenges remain in the uneven distribution and quality of teachers, inadequate physical and digital infrastructure, limited digital literacy, and policy approaches that are still largely top-down and insufficiently responsive to local contexts. These issues hinder the achievement of truly inclusive and high-quality education.* ***Novelty:*** *The key contribution of this study lies in its integrative perspective that combines structural (infrastructure), technological (digital platforms), human resource (teachers), and normative (human rights-based) dimensions. By advancing adaptive, evidence-based, and participatory strategies, this study provides a comprehensive framework for reshaping education policy in Indonesia toward greater inclusivity and equity.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar of national development and is enshrined as a right of every citizen in Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution. Equal access to education is the foundation for achieving social justice, improving the quality of human resources, and ensuring sustainable development. In the era of globalisation and digitalisation, an inclusive education system that encompasses all segments of society, including children with special needs and populations in remote areas, has become increasingly important (Jakulin & Josephine, 2023; Júnior et al., 2024). Awareness of the importance of inclusive education indicates that the role of the state is not limited to providing basic services, but also ensuring that access is equitable and relevant to technological developments and the diverse needs of society. Although Indonesia has implemented various policies such as the Indonesia Pintar (PIP) programme, Sekolah Rakyat (People's Schools), and the Guru/Sekolah Garis Depan (Frontline Teachers/Schools) initiative to expand educational services in 3T (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged) areas, various evaluations indicate that structural challenges remain dominant. Infrastructure

gaps, limited access to qualified teachers, and digital access remain significant obstacles, as outlined in a scoping review on early childhood inclusion and a report on social exclusion in Indonesia (Cabatay et al., 2024). Additionally, low community interest, stigma towards children with special needs, and limited social and cultural support further narrow the scope of education for vulnerable groups (Cabatay et al., 2024). This indicates that despite the launch of various affirmative programmes, their implementation still faces complex social and cultural realities.

On the other hand, existing literature indicates real opportunities through the strengthening of affirmative policies, teacher training, multisectoral collaboration, and educational technology. Furthermore, normative legal studies on access to education in remote areas emphasise a human rights perspective as a humanitarian framework in education policy (Iskandar et al., 2024), while private sector and NGO reports highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder roles in accelerating equity (Abdurrahim, 2024). Thus, there is strategic space to integrate government policies, the role of civil society, and educational technology support in creating a more inclusive education ecosystem. This forms the basis for this study to examine the effectiveness of policies during the administration of President Prabowo Subianto and formulate evidence-based alternative solutions.

Although the government has launched various policies to improve access to and quality of education, the situation on the ground still shows striking disparities. Poor road and transportation infrastructure in border areas, small islands, and remote regions hinder students' access to schools (Nugraha & Hambali, 2023; Supianto et al., 2023). Uneven access to electricity and the internet directly impacts the effectiveness of digital learning (Savitri, 2021; Werimo & Muthee, 2022). These conditions indicate that affirmative policies will not be optimal without the support of sustainable and modern basic infrastructure development. Additionally, the instability of curriculum policies, such as frequent changes over the past decade, has the potential to undermine the continuity of inclusive education (Veradegita et al., 2021). The shortage of qualified teachers remains a significant issue, particularly in 3T areas. Studies at SDN Cisampang and a small island high school in Aceh noted the low number of teachers with adaptive skills (Hilman et al., 2022). This challenge requires not only technical solutions but also results-oriented governance, continuous evaluation, and collaboration among various stakeholders.

Thus, educational problems in Indonesia are multidimensional, covering aspects of policy, human resources, infrastructure, and socio-culture. Based on this, the author will outline general solutions such as strengthening infrastructure, improving teacher welfare and competence, utilising technology, public-private collaboration, and developing a data-based monitoring and evaluation system. These strategies are designed not only as short-term solutions but also as systemic efforts to create an inclusive, adaptive, and equitable education ecosystem. With such an approach, education policies can address structural challenges and pave the way for sustainable education transformation. Hilman

et al. (2022) conclude that the lack of teacher training related to inclusion and differentiated learning is the primary systemic barrier. They recommend continuous training and direct mentoring in the field to improve the capacity of inclusive teachers. Rasmitadila et al. (2023) emphasise that collaboration between the government and educational institutions in providing training and certification is essential to create teachers who are capable of inclusive education. This evidence shows that improving the quality of human resources, especially teachers, is a key element that cannot be separated from the success of education equity policies.

Studies in remote areas discuss that improvements in road, electricity, and internet infrastructure are prerequisites for educational equity (Seto et al., 2024; Ajani, 2025). One of the main recommendations is synergy between the central and local governments in the development of basic infrastructure. Additionally, a study by Iskandar et al. (2024) emphasises the importance of e-learning platforms and the digitisation of teaching materials to reach students in 3T areas. This indicates that the integration of physical and digital infrastructure development is an urgent need to ensure that equity policies are not merely formal but also substantive. Furthermore, Timilsana (2017) legal-normative article highlights a human rights-based approach as the foundation for formulating affirmative policies, including scholarships and guarantees of educational services. Rodiyah et al. (2018) show that public-private collaboration through CSR, as well as the role of communities and NGOs, can bridge the government's shortcomings in non-physical support, such as community mobilisation and the provision of local transportation. Thus, the role of multiple stakeholders further emphasises that educational equity is not only the responsibility of the government but also the result of synergy between various development actors.

Various empirical and evaluative studies over the past five years provide an overview that, while physical access has improved with the presence of schools in most areas, educational quality remains concentrated in urban areas. Timilsana (2017) highlights a digital facility gap between cities and villages, while Hanafiah et al. (2025) confirm the low facilities and teacher competencies in remote areas. Additionally, Obisike & Adalikwu-Obisike (2024) highlight inconsistent inclusive policy trends as a cause of limited program sustainability in regions. This disparity is also evident in UNICEF data, which states that 67% of children with special needs still lack access to inclusive education (Ompusunggu et al., 2025). From an economic perspective, Riyadi & Ghuzini (2022) study emphasises that educational inequality is negatively correlated with economic growth in 3T regions, reinforcing the urgency of systemic intervention. Thus, it is clear that educational equity is not merely an educational issue but is closely linked to national economic development and social welfare.

Based on this analysis, there are several fundamental gaps between the literature and the implementation of education policies. The lack of synergy between physical and digital infrastructure, high inequality in distribution and quality of teachers despite the implementation of the Frontline Teacher programme, inclusive policies that are still top-

down and unresponsive to local conditions, and an evaluation system that is still fragmented and not entirely based on transparent data are issues that must be addressed immediately. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to identify and evaluate the effectiveness of policies aimed at equalising access to education during the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. By integrating the latest secondary data, official reports, and scientific studies, this research aims to provide an up-to-date and objective picture of the realisation of access to and quality of education in 3T regions, the role of infrastructure, teachers, technology, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the implementation of human rights principles in affirmative education policies.

The study adopts an integrative approach that combines structural perspectives (infrastructure), human resources (teachers), educational technology, and human rights foundations, which have not been comprehensively addressed in previous literature. The scope of the research is limited to national policies launched since 2024 to the present, covering key programmes such as the PIP, People's Schools, the Merdeka Curriculum, and human rights-based inclusive education initiatives. This research will also propose adaptive, sustainable, and participatory alternative solutions to address educational access and quality gaps, grounded in relevant and implementable scientific analysis.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilises secondary data sources obtained from national and international scientific journals, government policy documents, reports from official institutions, and articles from credible online media. The primary sources include publications from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), and reports from international organisations such as UNICEF and UNESCO. Additionally, academic journals from the past five years relevant to the topics of educational equity, inclusion policies, and education in 3T regions were used as primary references. Thus, the data analysed in this study is a combination of academic documents, official policies, and empirical reports that complement one another.

Since this research is qualitative and employs a library research approach, it does not involve samples in the form of participants or physical objects. Samples in this context are documents selected based on specific inclusion criteria, namely: (1) published between 2019 and 2025, (2) relevant to the topics of educational equity and inclusion, and (3) having academic or policy validity that can be accounted for. The selection process was conducted through systematic searches using keywords such as 'educational equity,' 'inclusion policy,' '3T regions,' and 'Prabowo education policy' in databases such as Google Scholar, SINTA, Scopus, and official government portals. This stage ensures that only literature and documents relevant to the research focus are included in the analysis.

The research steps include the identification, classification, and analysis of documents using a systematic framework designed to maintain data consistency (Zaytsev et al., 2019), as illustrated in Figure 1. The analysis is conducted in three main stages. First, thematic coding involves sorting and coding the content of documents based on broad

themes such as access, quality, infrastructure, teaching staff, and affirmative policies. Second, synthesis of findings, in which the coded data is reorganised and combined to obtain a complete narrative about the effectiveness of policies, implementation barriers, and alternative opportunities. Third, policy evaluation was conducted using an evaluative approach based on an input–output–outcome framework, enabling the measurement of government policies in terms of their ability to address the challenge of inequality in access to education. Throughout these stages, the study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach based solely on document content (content-based analysis), rather than relying on quantitative formulas.

Figure 1. Research methods used

To ensure data validity, the analysis was conducted using a qualitative content analysis approach. Source triangulation was applied by comparing the results of various types of documents, including scientific journals, government reports, and articles from reliable online media. Validity and reliability were enhanced through cross-checking between documents and verifying the consistency of findings with empirical data available in official reports. As a result, every conclusion drawn is not only narrative but also supported by consistent written evidence. Additionally, each analysis result is reinforced with bibliographic citations, ensuring the scientific integrity of the research remains intact.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Evaluation of the people's school policy & PIP

Literature analysis shows that the People's School and Indonesia Pintar (PIP) programmes have significantly improved access to education for children from low-income families. Evaluation data show that PIP has reached millions of students, reduced dropout rates, and expanded service coverage to junior high and senior high schools (Mashur, 2023). However, there are challenges in terms of the accuracy of aid distribution, programme socialisation, and public awareness of the policy objectives.

Frontline teachers (GGD) & frontline schools (SGD)

An evaluation of the GGD/SGD programme in 3T areas shows an increase in the number of civil servant teachers and the provision of learning facilities. However, the impact on student academic achievement is still limited (Giatman et al., 2019). A study using the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) method in East Nusa Tenggara also noted that the selection of programme locations was not entirely accurate and did not reach the schools most in need (Samalo & Jasmina, 2024).

Educational technology & infrastructure

The latest literature review confirms that the use of technology, such as e-learning platforms and mobile-based learning applications, effectively increases the reach and effectiveness of learning, especially in 3T areas (Kang, 2024). However, the implementation of digital programmes is still hampered by low digital literacy and limited basic infrastructure.

Inclusive education system & curriculum evaluation

A review of the education evaluation system shows a shift towards a holistic evaluation model that encompasses academic, character, and socio-emotional aspects of students. However, obstacles in the form of limited digital infrastructure and teacher understanding remain prominent (Arianto et al., 2024).

Multisectoral cooperation & human rights

Literature shows that collaboration between the government, the private sector, NGOs, and local communities plays a role in accelerating educational equity. Contributions include corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, scholarships, and educational infrastructure development. Additionally, a human rights-based approach is a crucial foundation for designing inclusive affirmative policies (Johnstone et al., 2024).

Discussion

The results of the study indicate significant progress in efforts to achieve educational equity through affirmative action policies implemented by the government. Programmes such as Sekolah Rakyat (People's Schools) and Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP) have proven effective in expanding access to education for children from low-income families, reducing dropout rates, and increasing coverage to junior high and senior high school levels. These findings indicate that affirmative action policies have had a direct impact on quantitative dimensions, namely, increased educational participation. However, these achievements have not been fully matched by improvements in the quality of education provided. This finding aligns with Osemeka's (2016) analysis, which emphasises the crucial role of affirmative action programmes in ensuring equitable access, but is further reinforced by Joshkun et al. (2024), who highlight that the success of such programmes cannot be separated from the availability of adequate infrastructure and digital literacy. In other words, although access has been widened, without a strong supporting foundation, achieving equitable quality education is challenging. Therefore, strengthening basic infrastructure, particularly electricity, roads, and internet, as well as a comprehensive monitoring system, is a prerequisite for the benefits of affirmative action programmes to be felt equitably and sustainably.

The Frontline Teachers (GGD) and Frontline Schools (SGD) programmes have made significant contributions by increasing the number of teachers in 3T areas and providing more adequate learning facilities. However, the main challenges lie in the distribution and quality of teachers. The uneven placement of educators, coupled with limited

supporting infrastructure, reduces the effectiveness of this policy. Rød (2022) highlights that teacher distribution issues are a recurring structural barrier, while Colliver & Lee-Hammond (2019) emphasise the need for community involvement and policy adaptation to local cultural contexts. This underscores that increasing the number of teachers alone is insufficient; quality, relevance of placement, and capacity building aligned with local needs are key priorities.

In other words, increasing the number of teachers will only be meaningful if sustainable and contextual professional development strategies follow it. The use of educational technology is another aspect that offers excellent opportunities for equal access. Recent literacy data shows that the use of e-learning platforms and mobile learning applications has great potential to reach remote areas (Fayanto et al., 2023). However, digital literacy issues among teachers and students, as well as limited internet infrastructure, remain serious obstacles. Ihsanudin & Rahayu (2019) even emphasise the need for public-private collaboration to create an inclusive digital ecosystem, while Allouch et al. (2024) underline the importance of a curriculum that is ready to integrate technology. Therefore, the integration of educational technology cannot be done partially, but must be systemic, involving capacity building through digital training, the provision of adequate equipment, and the development of equitable network infrastructure. If this strategy is implemented, technology can become a transformative instrument that narrows the education gap between urban and rural areas.

The transformation of the education evaluation system also points to a more progressive direction of change. The shift from a traditional evaluation model to a holistic evaluation model that assesses students' academic, character, and socio-emotional aspects is an important step towards true inclusion. However, implementation in the field has not been entirely smooth. Anisah et al. (2024) emphasise that limitations in digital infrastructure and the lack of teacher competence in managing new evaluation systems are serious obstacles. Benjamin & Dangwal (2025) also warn that disparities between regions may widen if schools' capacity to implement technology-based evaluations is uneven. This means that the paradigm shift in evaluation must be accompanied by intensive mentoring programmes, continuous training, and adequate infrastructure support to ensure that the goals of holistic evaluation are truly achieved.

Beyond technical aspects, normative and collaborative dimensions also play a strategic role. Studies indicate that educational equity cannot be achieved by the government alone but must involve the private sector, NGOs, and local communities. The community-based partnership model recommended by DePetris & Eames (2017) offers a collaborative approach that can enhance the effectiveness of programme implementation in 3T regions. On the other hand, Adiguna et al. (2024) emphasise that all policies must be consistent with human rights principles, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). With this normative foundation, multisectoral collaboration can serve as a mechanism that not only

accelerates educational equity but also ensures the sustainability and accountability of programmes.

Overall, this study confirms that while significant progress has been made in terms of access, the quality of education still faces serious challenges. The disparities that emerge are influenced by weak integration between physical and digital infrastructure, uneven distribution of teachers, and inclusion policies that remain top-down and unresponsive to local needs. Therefore, going forward, a more adaptive, evidence-based, and participatory policy approach is needed. Interventions that prioritise strengthening infrastructure, teacher capacity development, technology integration, and human rights-based multisectoral collaboration will be key to achieving truly equitable, inclusive education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Access to education during President Prabowo's term has improved through the PIP, Sekolah Rakyat, and GGD/SGD programmes, which have increased school participation, especially in 3T areas. However, the quality of learning remains uneven due to limited infrastructure, uneven distribution of teachers, quality gaps, low utilisation of technology, and top-down policies. **Implication:** Policies are needed that not only expand access but also improve quality through the strengthening of physical and digital infrastructure, contextual teacher training, and the integration of human rights-based educational technology. Multisectoral collaboration is key to building an inclusive and sustainable education ecosystem. **Limitation:** This study is limited to secondary data from academic literature, official reports, and online publications, which limits its empirical scope. Additionally, the limited literature on policy implementation during President Prabowo's early years restricts the depth of analysis. **Future Research:** Future research needs to be field-based through surveys, interviews, and quantitative analysis. Focus should also be given to the use of digital technologies such as e-learning, AI, and satellite internet in remote areas, as well as longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of affirmative policies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dwi Pangga contributed to the conceptual framework, research design, and drafting of the manuscript. **Ketut Suma** was involved in methodology development, literature review, and data analysis. **I Nyoman Jampel** contributed to supervision, validation of findings, and critical review of the manuscript. **Made Candiasa** handled data curation, sourcing references, and project coordination. All listed authors have reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of this submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, whether financial, academic, or personal, that could have influenced the content, analysis, or conclusions presented in this study.

ETHICAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This manuscript complies fully with the principles of research and publication ethics. The authors affirm that the work presented is original, carried out with academic integrity, and free from unethical practices, including plagiarism, data fabrication, or duplicate submission.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors confirm that no AI-based technologies or digital writing tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript. All parts of the research, analysis, and writing were conducted solely by the authors.

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