



## THE QUALITY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CSN) IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN PALU CITY

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### Article History

Received : 27/05/2025

Revised : 15/06/2025

Accepted : 20/06/2025

### Keywords:

Service quality,  
Inclusive education,  
Children with special  
needs (CSN), New  
public service, Palu city.

**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the quality of inclusive education services for Children with Special Needs (CSN) in Palu City using the New Public Service (NPS) approach developed by Robert B. Denhardt. The NPS framework emphasizes a public service orientation that does not merely focus on efficiency or customer satisfaction, but rather positions citizens as active participants in decision-making processes. It also underscores the importance of democratic values, ethics, accountability, and collaboration. This study employs a qualitative method, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted in several inclusive schools in Palu. The findings indicate that the quality of education services for CSN continues to face a number of challenges, including limited community involvement, insufficient budgetary and infrastructural support, and weak coordination among schools, families, and other stakeholders. Although the principle of inclusivity has been formally adopted, its implementation remains far from the core tenets of NPS. Therefore, strengthening participatory governance that is responsive to the needs of CSN is essential to realizing an inclusive and equitable education service.

**How to Cite:** Mateka, S. D., Khattab, S., Suasa, S., & Sasterio, S. (2025). THE QUALITY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CSN) IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN PALU CITY. *Prima Magistra: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 6(3), 272-282. <https://doi.org/10.37478/jpm.v6i3.3920>

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### Publisher:

Program Studi PGSD Universitas Flores. Jln. Samratulangi,  
Kelurahan Paupire, Ende, Flores.

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## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education represents a concrete manifestation of the state's commitment to ensuring the right to education for all citizens, including Children with Special Needs (CSN). Palu City is recorded as the region with the highest number of CSN in Central Sulawesi, totaling 690 out of 3,105 CSN across the province (Kemendikbud, 2025). Furthermore, based on preliminary observations, Palu also has the highest number of inclusive schools at the senior high school and vocational levels (SMA/SMK) in the province, with a total of 73 schools. However, the availability of Special Assistant Teachers (GPK) remains uneven; only 51 GPK are distributed throughout the entire province, with 29 stationed in Palu.

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that the distribution of CSN in Central Sulawesi remains widespread across various regencies and municipalities, with Palu City recording the highest number 690 students out of a total of 3,105 CSN in the province (Kemendikbud, 2025). Most of these students are recorded as having single disabilities (2,967 students), while the remainder (138 students) have multiple disabilities, reflecting the complexity of their educational service needs. Palu City not only has the highest number of CSN but also a high level of data validation, with 636 students officially verified, surpassing other regions such as Parigi Moutong (333 CSN), Morowali (280 CSN), and Banggai (262 CSN). This disparity suggests that urban areas tend to have a higher concentration of CSN, which must be balanced with the adequate provision of services and educational support, including the strategic role of GPK to ensure the sustainability of inclusive and quality education. Some schools even lack GPK entirely, directly affecting the quality of inclusive education services. This condition presents both a challenge and an opportunity in the pursuit of equitable, just, and inclusive education delivery.

Normatively, Indonesia possesses a strong legal foundation to support inclusive education. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System affirms that education is the right of every citizen (UURI,2003). Furthermore, Ministerial Regulation No. 70 of 2009

mandates that schools must admit and provide services for CSN alongside regular students (Permendiknas, 2009). However, the implementation of inclusive education in practice continues to face a range of challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of trained teachers, and suboptimal curricula that are not fully adaptive to the needs of CSN. For example, deaf students face communication barriers that require specialized teaching methods and media, such as sign language and assistive hearing devices. These circumstances demand qualified teachers and responsive learning environments. Unfortunately, many inclusive schools continue to experience significant gaps between ideal policy objectives and actual practice, particularly in terms of facilities, educator competencies, and psychosocial support.

**Table 1.** Condition of CSN in Central Sulawesi

| No           | City/Regency              | Total Students | Valid Students<br>(***) | Verified CSN Students | Single Disability<br>(*) | Multiple Disabilities<br>(**) |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1            | Banggai Kepulauan Regency | 24,552         | 23,848                  | 315                   | 298                      | 17                            |
| 2            | Donggala Regency          | 62,011         | 59,693                  | 258                   | 246                      | 12                            |
| 3            | Poso Regency              | 38,832         | 37,904                  | 159                   | 145                      | 14                            |
| 4            | Banggai Regency           | 69,174         | 66,828                  | 262                   | 261                      | 1                             |
| 5            | Buol Regency              | 31,387         | 30,369                  | 130                   | 129                      | 1                             |
| 6            | Tolitoli Regency          | 43,243         | 42,374                  | 215                   | 204                      | 11                            |
| 7            | Morowali Regency          | 37,047         | 35,550                  | 280                   | 279                      | 1                             |
| 8            | Parigi Moutong Regency    | 100,371        | 95,921                  | 333                   | 324                      | 9                             |
| 9            | Tojo Una-Una Regency      | 32,685         | 31,418                  | 95                    | 87                       | 8                             |
| 10           | Sigi Regency              | 47,815         | 45,070                  | 195                   | 189                      | 6                             |
| 11           | Banggai Laut Regency      | 15,507         | 14,951                  | 52                    | 51                       | 1                             |
| 12           | North Morowali Regency    | 25,058         | 23,758                  | 121                   | 118                      | 3                             |
| 13           | Palu City                 | 76,412         | 74,466                  | 690                   | 636                      | 54                            |
| <b>Total</b> |                           | <b>604,094</b> | <b>582,150</b>          | <b>3,105</b>          | <b>2,967</b>             | <b>138</b>                    |

Source: Kemendikbud (2025). Notes: \*) Single Disability = Students identified with only one type of disability., \*\*) Multiple Disabilities = Students identified with more than one type of disability., \*\*\*) Valid Students = Students whose data have been verified in the national education system.

Numerous studies have explored service quality in public and education sectors; however, limited attention has been paid to inclusive education in Central Sulawesi, particularly in areas such as Palu City (Japutra et al., 2023; Quintu et al., 2023; Lukitoyo et al., 2023; Mohzana et al., 2024; Sri Andayani, 2022). This is concerning given the significant number of CSN in the region (Quintu et al., 2023). The lack of academic attention has resulted in the marginalization of this issue within scholarly discourse. Some relevant studies, including those by Amzat et al. (2023) and Dewi et al. (2021) have examined customer and managerial perceptions of education service quality in Indonesia and Malaysia (Amzat et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2021). While these studies do not focus specifically on inclusive education, their findings highlight that service dimensions, performance, and service targets are interrelated factors that shape overall quality (Silva & Pinto, 2023). Conversely, Sohail and Hasan criticize the limitations of the SERVQUAL model and propose a more comprehensive framework that incorporates technical, functional, and image quality, although the mechanisms underlying these dimensions remain inadequately explained (Sohail & Hasan, 2021).

From a policy perspective, Sanderson (1996) emphasizes that public service quality is inseparable from the structural and functional effectiveness of state policies, including resource availability and socio-economic dynamics. This emphasis on the state's role is particularly relevant in the context of inclusive education, which is highly dependent on consistent policy support. Another study by Seth reviews 19 models of service quality and simplifies them for

application in various settings; however, their quantitative approach falls short in capturing the social complexity of inclusive education (Seth et al., 2005). Meanwhile, Quintal et al. (2012) developed an integrated model in higher education by combining trust, satisfaction, and institutional image to enhance service quality.

In the realm of public service, the quality of inclusive education can be examined using the NPS framework, which emphasizes public interest orientation, participation, ethics, accountability, democratic values, and non-profit service delivery (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Unfortunately, the implementation of NPS principles in the context of inclusive education in Palu City continues to encounter numerous obstacles. These include limited public participation, constrained budgets, and weak synergy among schools, families, and other stakeholders, challenges that undermine efforts to provide high-quality services for CSN.

This study aims to analyze the quality of inclusive education services for CSN in Palu City using the NPS framework. Two senior high schools in Palu were selected as research sites, each representing contrasting conditions one with sufficient inclusive facilities and one with limited resources to provide a more representative overview. Through this research, it is expected that strategic recommendations can be formulated to enhance the quality of inclusive education, both in terms of policy and practical implementation, as a contribution to the broader effort of building a more just and inclusive education system in Indonesia.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach to explore how the principles of NPS, particularly public interest orientation, participation, and collaboration are implemented in inclusive education services in Palu City. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and contextual exploration of the meanings, experiences, and practices of service actors. The research was conducted in Palu City, Central Sulawesi, which has the highest number of students with special needs in the province. The study focused on educational institutions that provide inclusive education services as well as relevant local government agencies responsible for the management of inclusive education.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and limited participant observation, while secondary data were obtained from document reviews of relevant policies, program reports, and statistical data on inclusive education (Schmied, 2023). Research informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of inclusive education services. Table 2 summarizes eight key informants involved in the study on the implementation of inclusive education in Palu City, representing diverse institutional backgrounds and strategic positions. The informants include a legislative representative, namely the Chair of the Commission at the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of Central Sulawesi Province, as well as education practitioners at the upper secondary and vocational school levels. Among them are three school principals from SMA 7, Al-Khairat, and SMKN 1 Palu, two GPK from SMA 4 and SMA 8 Palu, and two Guidance and Counseling Teachers from SMK 7 and SMAs GKST Imanuel Palu. This composition reflects an effort to obtain a diverse and in-depth perspective on the policies, practices, and challenges in the implementation of inclusive education at the secondary school level in Palu City. The following are the informants involved in this research:

These informants provided diverse perspectives on how public interest values are understood and implemented in service practices, as well as how citizen engagement and inter-actor collaboration take place in the context of inclusive education. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring the informants' experiences and views regarding the two main principles of the NPS framework (Sarfo et al., 2021). In addition, direct observations were carried out in several inclusive schools to examine service interactions and to document the supporting facilities available for students with special needs. Data analysis employed a thematic analysis approach, which involved data reduction, coding, theme identification, and interpretation. The entire process was conducted in a reflective and in-



depth manner to ensure that empirical findings remained grounded in the theoretical framework of NPS.

**Table 2.** Informant Groups

| No | Name                             | Institution                                                            | Position                        |
|----|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1  | H. Moh. Hidayat<br>Pakamundi, SE | Regional House of Representatives (DPRD),<br>Central Sulawesi Province | Chair of Commission             |
| 2  | Safuruddin                       | SMA 7 Palu City                                                        | Principal                       |
| 3  | Awalia                           | Al-Khairat Palu                                                        | Principal                       |
| 4  | Misra                            | SMKN 1 Palu City                                                       | Principal                       |
| 5  | Dwi                              | SMA 4 Palu City                                                        | GPK                             |
| 6  | Frafifta                         | SMA 8 Palu City                                                        | GPK                             |
| 7  | Lulu                             | SMK 7 Palu City                                                        | Guidance and Counseling Teacher |
| 8  | Elen                             | SMAS GKST Imanuel Palu                                                 | Guidance and Counseling Teacher |

To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of sources and methods was used, along with member checking involving key informants, and systematic documentation of the analysis and decision-making process. With this methodological design, the study aims to provide a rich and contextual understanding of how inclusive education services are delivered, guided by the principles of public interest and citizen participation as articulated in the NPS approach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To evaluate service quality in the context of inclusive education, this study refers to several models commonly applied in the public sector. Among the various frameworks reviewed, four relevant approaches are highlighted: the technical and functional quality model, the GAP and SERVQUAL model, the attribute-based service quality model, and the NPS framework.

The first model, the technical and functional quality model, was introduced by Grönroos. According to Grönroos, this model assesses service quality based on two main dimensions: technical quality and functional quality (Grönroos, 1984). Technical quality refers to the final outcome of the service received by the customer (Kang & James, 2004). In the education context, this dimension reflects how effectively the learning process meets students' substantive needs, such as reliability, accuracy, performance, and instructional effectiveness. Meanwhile, functional quality refers to the manner in which the service is delivered. This includes interactions between educators and students, approachability, accessibility, responsiveness, and comfort throughout the teaching and learning process. Both dimensions are complementary and serve as critical indicators of user satisfaction. A service that is technically excellent but poorly delivered may still result in dissatisfaction, and vice versa.

The second model, the GAP and SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, emphasizes the gap between customer expectations and their perceptions of received service (Valarie et al., 1992). The model identifies five primary gaps: (1) the gap between customer expectations and management perceptions of those expectations; (2) the gap between management perceptions and service quality specifications; (3) the gap between service specifications and actual service delivery; (4) the gap between service delivery and external communications (e.g., advertising and promotions); and (5) the gap between customer expectations and their actual service perceptions, resulting from the preceding four gaps (Kang & James, 2004). In addition, the model introduces five service quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This approach helps organizations identify critical points in service delivery and prioritize improvements based on customer-valued dimensions (Amzat et al., 2023; Seth et al., 2005; Sohail & Hasan, 2021).

The third model, the attribute-based service quality model, focuses on evaluating services based on specific attributes that users consider significant (Grönroos, 1984; Kang & James, 2004). These attributes include physical facilities and processes, such as building conditions, equipment, and accessibility. It also includes human resource behavior, encompassing staff-student interactions and professional attitudes. Lastly, this model considers



professional judgment attributes related to the technical competence and integrity of service providers. The approach emphasizes that customer perceptions of service quality are shaped not only by outcomes or processes, but also by the emotional and subjective experiences during service interaction.

The fourth model, rooted in the NPS framework, emphasizes five core principles that shape the normative structure of public service delivery (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). First, public interest orientation, where services are designed to meet actual community needs rather than merely administrative efficiency. Second, participation and collaboration, highlighting the importance of active involvement from communities, families, and stakeholders in decision-making and service evaluation. Third, ethical values and accountability, encompassing transparency, institutional responsibility, and integrity in service implementation. Fourth, democratic value orientation, which upholds rights, equal access, and respect for diversity. Fifth, a service-oriented rather than profit-oriented model, which rejects market-based logics in the provision of social services. While these principles provide an ideal framework, their implementation in Palu City still faces significant challenges, including limited budget allocations, low public participation, and weak stakeholder coordination. These obstacles point to the need for strengthened governance dimensions to realize high-quality inclusive education services for CSN.

### Quality of Inclusive Education Services

This section examines the quality of inclusive education services for CSN in Palu City using the NPS framework for assessing public policy quality. Within this model, inclusive education service quality emphasizes public interest orientation, democratic values, active citizen participation, and institutional accountability. However, field observations indicate that the implementation of NPS principles in inclusive education in Palu City faces several obstacles, including low community involvement, limited budget allocations, insufficient family support, and weak stakeholder engagement. These barriers ultimately hinder the delivery of high-quality inclusive education services.

### Public Interest as a Service Orientation

Ideally, schools as providers of inclusive education should deliver optimal services to meet the needs of CSN. In reality, however, field findings in Palu reveal that these needs remain unmet. This is evident in the school-level assessment process. Only two out of six surveyed schools conducted initial assessments for CSN, despite the critical role of early assessment in mapping and identifying students' conditions. Initial assessments also function as a form of early mitigation to guide appropriate support. This process is essential to inform broader aspects of treatment and learning strategies. Unfortunately, this effort is largely absent in most inclusive schools in Palu City. As a result, many CSN remain unidentified at the early stages of enrollment.

Table 3 presents eight secondary schools in Palu City that are officially designated as inclusive education providers, consisting of various categories such as general senior high schools (SMA), vocational high schools (SMK), private senior high schools (SMAS), and maritime vocational schools (SMK Pelayaran). Of the eight schools, six are affiliated with general education, while the remaining two SMAs Alkhairat and SMAs GKST Imanuel Palu are religiously affiliated. However, only two schools, SMA 4 and SMA 8 Palu, have conducted assessments of students with special needs. The other six schools, including both public and private institutions, have not carried out formal assessments. This disparity in assessment practices indicates that, although these schools have been designated as inclusive institutions, the implementation remains uneven and tends to be administrative in nature, lacking sufficient technical measures to accurately identify and respond to the individual needs of students with special needs.

The two schools that conducted initial assessments, as shown in the table above SMA 4 Palu City and SMA 8 Palu City, successfully mapped the cognitive abilities of their students. Using Intelligence Quotient (IQ) criteria, both schools identified students with special needs based on IQ test results. The IQ measurements were conducted using standardized instruments



provided by professional psychological institutions, employing classifications ranging from superior to the lowest category of mental retardation. As a result, SMA 8 Palu City identified a total of 12 students as CSN.

**Table 3.** Inclusive Education Schools in Palu City

| No | Name of Inclusive School | Category (Senior/Vocational) | Affiliation | Initial Assessment |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1  | SMA 4 Palu City          | Senior High School (SMA)     | Public      | Yes                |
| 2  | SMA 8 Palu City          | Senior High School (SMA)     | Public      | Yes                |
| 3  | SMA 7 Palu City          | Senior High School (SMA)     | Public      | No                 |
| 4  | SMKN 1 Palu City         | Vocational High School (SMK) | Public      | No                 |
| 5  | SMAS GKST Imanuel Palu   | Private Senior High School   | Religious   | No                 |
| 6  | SMAS Alkhairat Palu      | Private Senior High School   | Religious   | No                 |
| 7  | SMK Alkhairat Palu       | Vocational High School (SMK) | Religious   | No                 |
| 8  | SMKN 7 Palu              | Vocational Maritime School   | Public      | No                 |

Table 4 presents the assessment results of 12 students with special needs at one of the inclusive schools in Palu City, with their identities anonymized. The majority of the students are male and come from grade X to XI, with science (IPA) and social studies (IPS) concentrations. The assessment results show that most of the students—eight out of twelve—fall under the category of mental retardation, while three are categorized as borderline, and one as low average. These findings reflect the diversity of special educational needs among the students and highlight the importance of accurate assessments to ensure targeted educational interventions and the availability of appropriate learning support services tailored to each student's cognitive condition.

**Table 4.** Assessment Results of CSN

| No | Name<br>(Anonymized) | Gender | Class    | Category            |
|----|----------------------|--------|----------|---------------------|
| 1  | MRL                  | L      | X A      | Low Average         |
| 2  | FI                   | L      | XI IPS   | Borderline          |
| 3  | MR                   | L      | XI IPA   | Borderline          |
| 4  | FW                   | L      | XI IPA 2 | Borderline          |
| 5  | ZA                   | L      | X A      | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 6  | F                    | L      | X B      | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 7  | SS                   | -      | X C      | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 8  | H                    | L      | XI IPA 2 | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 9  | MK                   | L      | XI IPA 1 | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 10 | AR                   | L      | XI IPA 3 | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 11 | RI                   | L      | X B      | Mental Reterdatioan |
| 12 | RH                   | L      | XI IPA 3 | Mental Reterdatioan |

Furthermore, the absence of regional regulations—whether in the form of provincial or municipal by laws (Perda) has significantly hindered the realization of inclusive education implementation. This regulatory vacuum has broad implications for the operation of inclusive schools. At the institutional level, schools face difficulties in executing inclusive education due to the lack of a legal framework that can serve as a technical reference in the field. For example, in terms of budgetary support, there is currently no specific allocation designated for inclusive education programs.

“So far, there has been no regulation that specifically governs the administration of inclusive education at the provincial level. I believe this is an important issue. Institutionally, we have mechanisms to bring this matter forward as a draft bylaw. Of course, it is not a short process—there are stages that must be followed. But it is certainly possible, especially since the issue concerns the rights of citizens, particularly CSN, and should be addressed urgently.” (Interview with Chair of Commission B, DPRD of Central Sulawesi Province, June 4, 2025).

Another consequence of the absence of legal provisions regarding technical implementation is the lack of binding mechanisms that require schools to take inclusive education seriously. Field findings show that nearly all schools struggle to appropriately accommodate CSN. This situation stems from the lack of detailed technical guidelines on how CSN should be treated. An additional barrier is the limited availability of human resources capable of bridging the specific needs of CSN in schools. Most schools lack adequate personnel with expertise in inclusive education. In many cases, special education assistants are recruited from among regular subject teachers, which increases their workload. Moreover, as previously mentioned, there are no regulations that provide official incentives or compensation for special education assistants.

Figure 1 captures a moment of togetherness at one of the inclusive education provider schools in Palu City, featuring students with special needs alongside teachers, support staff, and visiting educators. They are seen posing cheerfully while making sign language gestures, symbolizing the spirit of diversity and inclusivity within the school environment. Most of the students, dressed in blue-patterned school uniforms, are seated in the front row, while the educators stand behind them with friendly and caring expressions. The warm interaction depicted in this image illustrates that inclusive education is not only implemented through formal classroom instruction but also cultivated through supportive social relationships that foster empathy and help students with special needs build self-confidence as they grow and develop alongside their peers.



Figure 1. Field Documentation with CSN

In summary, from the perspective of public interest as a service orientation, the implementation of inclusive education in Palu City has not demonstrated satisfactory performance. The delivery of inclusive education services remains far from optimal. This situation may be interpreted as a form of neglect, where the issue of inclusion continues to be treated as peripheral. Such neglect stems primarily from the absence of regulatory frameworks that support inclusive education in Palu. Without legal authority to compel inclusive education providers—namely, schools—to prioritize the needs of CSN as a matter of urgent public concern, there is little institutional motivation to act. As long as no regional bylaw (Perda) is enacted to regulate and safeguard inclusive education in Palu City, the issue will likely remain marginalized and fail to gain the attention it deserves from both policymakers and the public.

#### Participation and Collaboration in Service Delivery

Participation and collaboration are key elements emphasized in the NPS framework (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). The quality of public services is significantly influenced by the

extent of stakeholder involvement; the more actors involved, the better the policy outcomes. However, the situation in Palu City reveals the opposite, participation in inclusive education service delivery for CSN is extremely limited. During field visits, almost every school reported minimal to no participation in addressing inclusion issues. This lack of engagement is evident across all levels: families, schools, and local government.

One of the key factors contributing to low participation is a prevailing social norm uniquely present in Palu, where CSN are often perceived as a source of shame. This stigma has led many parents to reject the categorization of their children as having special needs, even when assessments clearly indicate otherwise.

“Some people, or even most of them, consider inclusive children as a family disgrace or social shame. Their presence can trigger negative reactions from the community. They [CSN] are often seen as ‘children born from unapproved marriages.’ (Interview with Bu Dwi, GPK, SMA 4 Palu, May 22, 2025).

As the foundational unit in education, families often fail to offer tolerance or support for CSN. Ideally, families should be the primary advocates for inclusion (Bialik & Mhiri, 2022; Pratiwi, 2024). Their absence has a domino effect on the broader social environment. For example, schools face difficulties in appropriately positioning and treating CSN. Conflicts often arise due to discrepancies between parental beliefs and formal assessment results.

“We once nearly had a conflict with a student's parents. The reason was simple—they refused to accept that their child was categorized as inclusive, even though our assessment indicated otherwise. Since then, we have been very cautious about how we communicate assessment results to parents.” (Interview with Bu Frafifta, GPK, SMA 8 Palu, May 23, 2025).

Teachers, another key actor in inclusive education, are also not yet fully engaged (Paju et al., 2022; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). An exception is SMA 4 Palu, which showed some positive practices. Visits to other schools revealed a concerning reality many teachers still lack awareness of inclusive education. Some were even entirely unfamiliar with the concept. As a result, inappropriate treatment occasionally occurs, even if unintentionally. While these actions may be subtle, they reflect a fundamental gap in understanding and capacity among those expected to support inclusive education.

“There are still some teachers not all, but a few who do not understand the concept of inclusion. Their lack of knowledge often leads them to treat CSN the same as regular students. We continue to raise awareness among teachers, but there are always one or two who still don’t understand.” (Interview with Bu Frafifta, May 23, 2025).

At the government level, the issue of inclusive education receives even less attention (Novrizal & Manaf, 2024; Sari et al., 2022). It was surprising to find that members of the provincial legislature were hearing about the issue for the first time during interviews (Cabatay et al., 2024). The lack of political interest may be attributed to the low electoral appeal of inclusion issues, which are rarely prioritized by political actors.

“This is the first time I’ve heard of such an issue. During my recess sessions, not once has anyone raised a complaint about this. But now that the issue has been brought forward, I think it’s something we should follow up on.” (Interview with Chair of Commission B, DPRD, June 4, 2025).

Another principle of NPS is collaboration. However, collaboration in inclusive education in Palu is equally limited. Very few actors either individuals or institutions are engaged in supporting inclusion efforts (Kiss et al., 2022; Setyawan et al., 2023). Of the eight schools visited, only two had established partnerships with professional institutions, and those partnerships were based solely on economic transactions. These collaborations involved hiring professional psychology services to conduct paid assessments of suspected CSN.

“So far, there are no organizations actively involved in inclusion issues. There are only a few, like professional psychology institutions, and even they only get involved when we request paid assessments.” (Interview with Bu Dwi, May 22, 2025).

In summary, participation from families, communities, schools, and local governments in addressing inclusive education for CSN in Palu remains far from optimal. This limited participation has hindered efforts to ensure equal treatment for CSN, contradicting the core vision of inclusive education. Meanwhile, collaboration among various stakeholders is nearly nonexistent. Where it does exist, it tends to be transactional and economically driven. While such initiatives deserve recognition, they lack long-term sustainability and are inherently fragile.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study affirms the importance of the NPS approach in evaluating and enhancing the quality of inclusive education services, particularly in the context of Palu City, which has the highest number of students with special needs in Central Sulawesi. Two core principles of this approach public interest orientation and participation and collaboration in service delivery offer a relevant normative framework for promoting more democratic, equitable, and inclusive service practices. First, the orientation toward public interest highlights that inclusive education services should not merely focus on administrative efficiency or institutional targets, but should be grounded in the actual needs and rights of citizens, particularly students with special needs CSN. In Palu, this orientation has begun to take shape through various inclusive education policies and programs. However, significant implementation challenges remain, including a shortage of trained educators, inaccessible school infrastructure, and budget allocations that do not yet prioritize inclusive services. As a result, the public interest that should lie at the core of service delivery has not yet been fully realized in practice.

Second, the principles of participation and collaboration are critical to enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of public services. The provision of inclusive education must involve a wide range of stakeholders teachers, parents, disability communities, local governments, and civil society organizations to ensure that policies and services align with the real needs on the ground. However, this study found that existing forms of participation remain largely top-down and have yet to foster equitable and meaningful dialogue. Cross-sectoral collaboration is also limited, leaving much of the potential for synergy untapped.

Based on these findings, this article recommends a shift in policy orientation from bureaucratic approaches to more participatory and citizen-centered frameworks. Local governments and educational institutions must strengthen inclusive participation mechanisms, create genuine public consultation spaces, and establish strategic partnerships with non-governmental actors. In addition, institutional and human resource capacities must be developed to ensure that NPS principles can be implemented more consistently and sustainably. Thus, the quality of inclusive education services depends not only on policy design but also on the underlying value orientation that guides service delivery. The NPS approach emphasizes that public service must be grounded in a commitment to the common good and implemented through equitable collaboration between the state and its citizens. In the context of inclusive education in Palu City, this represents both a challenge and an opportunity to realize more just, humane, and democratic governance for all citizens, including those with special needs.

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