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Inclusivity Discourse in Indonesian Education Policy News: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Garuda School Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how a single Kompas.com news article, "Sekolah Garuda Terbuka untuk Siswa Miskin, Inklusif, dan Tak Zonasi" (18 May 2025), constructs the discourse of inclusivity surrounding the Garuda School Program, an Indonesian government initiative introduced in 2025. Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model, comprising textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice, this study analyzes lexical choice, modality, and transitivity patterns within the primary article, supplemented by related Kompas.com coverage for triangulation. Findings show that the text consistently positions the state as an active, benevolent agent and students as passive recipients, a transitivity pattern coded across eleven clauses describing the program's operation. The text relies almost exclusively on a single official source and frames the program against a discredited predecessor, producing a discursive closure that limits critical scrutiny. At the sociocultural level, the inclusivity narrative rests on a merit-based selection criterion that academic literature on meritocratic belief associates with the reproduction of structural inequality, since academic achievement correlates with unevenly distributed forms of educational and cultural capital. These findings indicate that the inclusivity narrative does not merely coexist with meritocratic selection but actively lends it public legitimacy, allowing a procedurally framed policy to be read as substantively fair. As the analysis rests on a single primary text supplemented by limited secondary sources, its findings describe this specific case rather than Indonesian educational policy journalism in general.

Keywords: *Discursive Closure, Educational Inclusivity, Fairclough, Garuda School Program, Meritocracy*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of inclusive education in Indonesia has persistently occupied the tension between policy ideals and the realities of implementation (Jusni et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2022). When the Indonesian government introduced the Garuda Excellence School Program in mid-2025, the initiative was widely framed in national media as a major step toward equitable access to quality schooling. As one of Indonesia's most influential online news portals, Kompas.com published a series of reports that consistently positioned the program within narratives of inclusivity and educational equity, even as the policy itself retained a competitive, achievement-based admission structure. This apparent tension between an inclusive label and a selective mechanism forms the empirical starting point of the present study.

Mass media reporting is not a neutral conduit of information but an active discursive practice that participates in the construction of social reality (Choi & Varian, 2012; Fairclough, 2013; Lombard & Xu, 2021). Lexical choices, sentence structures, the selection of quoted sources, and the foregrounding or backgrounding of particular perspectives jointly produce meaning with ideological and political consequences. Within educational policy reporting specifically, language choices shape how citizens come to understand who benefits from a policy, who is positioned as deserving, and which forms of inequality remain visible or obscured (Phyak, 2021). Examining how Indonesian news media represent educational inclusivity policy is therefore both linguistically and educationally consequential, since public understanding of a policy's fairness is substantially mediated by how that policy is narrated.

The premise that meritocratic framing can obscure structural inequality is supported by a growing body of recent empirical scholarship. Batruch et al. (2023) demonstrated across four studies, including a survey spanning more than forty countries, that belief in school meritocracy reduces the perceived unfairness of social class inequality and weakens support for redistributive policy, indicating that meritocratic discourse carries consequences well beyond the classroom. Leotti et al. (2022) further argued that critical discourse analysis is particularly suited to revealing how institutional texts construct social problems and legitimize particular courses of action, a methodological position directly relevant to analyzing how policy news constructs the meaning of inclusivity. At the level of national policy documentation, Yasdin and Muksins (2024) showed that Indonesian education regulations are themselves saturated with paradigms of equality and justice that are invoked rhetorically without always translating into substantive equity outcomes, a pattern that closely parallels the inclusivity rhetoric surrounding the Garuda School Program. Together, these studies confirm that the contradiction this study investigates, namely the coexistence of inclusive language and exclusionary

mechanisms, is not unique to the Indonesian case but reflects a broader pattern documented across educational and policy contexts.

Despite this growing international literature on meritocratic discourse, research that applies discourse-analytic methods to Indonesian educational policy journalism specifically remains limited. Existing Indonesian-context studies have tended to address media framing of curriculum reform or broader policy communication, but few have examined how a single, highly visible news narrative simultaneously constructs inclusivity as a value and forecloses critical scrutiny of the selection mechanism it describes. This gap is significant because policy-oriented news discourse, unlike abstract policy text, actively participates in shaping public consent for government decisions that affect millions of students and families.

A Kompas.com news article entitled “Sekolah Garuda terbuka untuk siswa miskin, inklusif, dan tak zonasi” (Garuda Schools Are Open to Poor Students, Inclusive, and Free from Zoning Policies) serves as a particularly instructive text for examining this gap. The headline itself contains a discursive construction laden with ideological significance: the simultaneous deployment of “open,” “poor students,” “inclusive,” and “free from zoning policies” constructs a specific image of the program as both compassionate and reformist. Yet the same news coverage acknowledges, without critical elaboration, that admission still depends on academic performance. This raises questions central to the present inquiry: what ideology is produced and reproduced through this discursive construction, and whose interests are served when a merit-based selection mechanism is narrated through the vocabulary of inclusivity?

This study addresses these questions through Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1993, 2003, 2013), which examines text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice as dialectically interconnected levels of analysis. This framework is adopted because it offers an operational methodology for connecting close textual features, such as lexical choice and modality, to the broader institutional and ideological conditions under which educational policy news is produced and consumed, a connection that purely textual or purely sociological approaches address only partially. Accordingly, this study is guided by three research questions: What linguistic constructions within the Kompas.com news text represent the Garuda School Program as inclusive? How are the processes of text production and consumption shaped by the practices of Kompas.com as a media institution? and What ideological and power relations underlie the discourse of inclusivity surrounding the Garuda School Program, and how does this discourse relate to the persistence of meritocratic selection?

The novelty of this study lies in its explicit treatment of the inclusivity-meritocracy contradiction as a discursive object within Indonesian educational policy news, connecting Fairclough's textual, discursive, and sociocultural

dimensions specifically to the question of how media language can simultaneously promote and undermine substantive educational equity. While Batruch et al. (2023) established the psychological and societal consequences of meritocratic belief, and Yasdin and Muksins (2024) identified equity rhetoric embedded in Indonesian policy documents, neither study examined how such rhetoric is discursively constructed and circulated through news media at the moment a policy is introduced to the public. This study contributes a discourse-analytic lens to educational policy scholarship that complements existing quantitative and document-based approaches to inclusivity research in Indonesia, while also addressing a delimitation that is clarified further in the Methodology and Limitations sections: the analysis centers on a single primary news text, supplemented by related coverage for contextual triangulation, and its claims therefore pertain to the discursive construction of inclusivity within this specific case rather than to a generalized characterization of Indonesian media coverage as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis and the Choice of Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach within language studies that treats discourse not merely as a medium of communication but as a site of power relations and ideological contestation (Xiao & Li, 2021). Fairclough (1992) defines discourse as language use understood as a form of social practice, a view that positions language as an integral component of social structures that both shape and are shaped by power relations. Within this perspective, media texts function as sites where ideology is produced, reproduced, and, under certain conditions, transformed.

Among the scholars who have shaped this field, Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak are widely regarded as having developed the three most systematic analytical traditions, yet each foregrounds a different point of entry into discourse. Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach explains how discourse and society are mediated through mental models and shared social cognition, which makes it especially powerful for analyzing how individual cognition reproduces group-level ideology (Al-Ghamdi, 2021). Wodak's discourse-historical approach instead emphasizes the historical layering of discourse and is most often applied to long-running political controversies in which meaning accumulates across repeated, intertextually linked events. Fairclough et al. (2011) themselves noted that these traditions share a common critical orientation toward language as social practice even as their analytical emphases diverge, which suggests that the choice among them should be guided by the nature of the text under study rather than by the comparative standing of the theorist. The present study adopts Fairclough's three-dimensional model specifically because its dialectical linkage of text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice provides an operational bridge between close linguistic features and the institutional conditions of news production, a bridge that

is essential for analyzing a single, tightly bounded policy news article rather than a corpus accumulated over time or a discourse defined primarily by cognitive schemas.

Fairclough's model treats its three levels as dialectically interconnected rather than sequential (Fairclough, 2013; Munfarida, 1970). The first dimension, text, concerns the linguistic features of discourse itself, encompassing Halliday et al. (2014) three primary language functions: representation, which concerns how reality is portrayed; relation, which concerns how social relationships among participants are constructed; and identity, which concerns how social identities are represented. Operationally, textual analysis at this level examines vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and structure. The second dimension, discursive practice, examines the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, including journalistic routines and intertextual relations, with intertextuality referring to how a text incorporates or responds to prior texts (Fairclough, 1993). The third dimension, sociocultural practice, is the broadest level, situating discursive practices within their institutional and societal context to ask what social conditions surround a text's production, what ideologies operate within it, and what power relations are reproduced or contested.

Recent applications of this model to online news continue to demonstrate its capacity to connect these levels empirically rather than treating them as abstract categories. Tartory (2020) applied Fairclough's framework to news articles from two Middle Eastern outlets covering the same regional event and found that lexical selection and source attribution produced systematically divergent ideological framings depending on each outlet's national affiliation, illustrating how textual choices at the first dimension are conditioned by the institutional positioning addressed at the third. Al-Ghamdi (2021) combined Fairclough's textual insights with van Dijk's account of news production to analyze fear and hope framing in pandemic-related reporting, showing that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be productively combined when a study's object spans both close textual patterning and broader sociocognitive framing. These studies confirm that Fairclough's model retains analytical traction in contemporary digital news contexts, supporting its suitability for the present case.

Inclusivity, Meritocracy, and Educational Equity

Internationally, inclusive education refers to the right of every child to receive quality education without discrimination, as articulated in the Salamanca Statement and Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education (UNESCO, 1994). In Indonesia, inclusive education is regulated under the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 70 of 2009. However, the concept of inclusivity within Indonesian educational policy is often subject to a reductionist interpretation, in which inclusive schools are understood primarily as institutions accommodating students with special needs, while broader

socioeconomic dimensions of inclusivity, particularly access for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, receive comparatively less attention. The debate surrounding the Garuda School Program is highly relevant here, particularly the question of whether merit-based selection can simultaneously function as a form of social justice-oriented inclusivity.

This tension is not merely speculative; it is supported by a substantial body of recent peer-reviewed scholarship demonstrating that meritocratic framing in education tends to obscure rather than resolve structural inequality. Batruch et al. (2023) showed across four studies, including an international survey of more than eighty thousand respondents across more than forty countries, that belief in school meritocracy reduces the perceived unfairness of social class inequality and weakens public support for redistributive policy, indicating that meritocratic discourse carries consequences that extend well beyond the classroom into broader political attitudes. At the level of Indonesian policy documentation specifically, Yasdin and Muksins (2024) found that national education regulations are themselves saturated with rhetorical paradigms of equality and justice that are invoked discursively without necessarily translating into substantive equity outcomes in implementation, a pattern that closely parallels the rhetorical structure observed in the Garuda School Program's media coverage. Taken together, this literature substantiates, on independent empirical grounds, the premise that an inclusivity narrative can coexist with, and even help sustain, a selection mechanism that disproportionately favors already-advantaged students.

Media and the Reproduction of Educational Policy Discourse

Mass media play a central role in shaping public agendas and defining what is considered normal, desirable, or legitimate in educational policy (Hall et al., 2026; Herman & Chomsky, 2010). In the Indonesian context, studies examining the relationship between media, policy, and education remain comparatively limited relative to studies of media discourse in political or health contexts, though the methodological techniques developed in those adjacent domains transfer readily to the analysis of educational policy news. Several mechanisms documented elsewhere appear directly relevant to the present case:

1. Selective sourcing, whereby a small number of institutional voices come to dominate a news narrative while alternative perspectives are marginalized;
2. Intertextual legitimation, whereby a policy is favorably positioned through contrast with a discredited predecessor; and
3. Reactive-confirmatory reporting, whereby media outlets primarily transmit and clarify official statements rather than independently investigate their substance.

Leotti et al. (2022) argue that critical discourse analysis is particularly well suited to revealing how institutional texts construct social problems and legitimize particular courses of action by examining what a text does rather than only what it says, a methodological orientation directly relevant to analyzing how policy news constructs the meaning of inclusivity rather than merely reporting it. Read together with Al-Ghamdi (2021) and Tartory (2020) above, this body of work indicates that the discursive patterns observed in the Kompas.com coverage of the Garuda School Program, namely reliance on a single official source and the framing of the new program against a discredited predecessor, are consistent with documented tendencies in media discourse internationally rather than being idiosyncratic to this case alone.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach grounded in Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The primary data source was a single Kompas.com article, "Sekolah Garuda Terbuka untuk Siswa Miskin, Inklusif, dan Tak Zonasi" (Garuda Schools Are Open to Poor Students, Inclusive, and Not Based on Zoning), published on 18 May 2025 (Sutrisna & Akbar, 2025). This article was chosen because it functioned as the originating text from which the program's public framing later propagated across other reports. The single-text design was a deliberate analytical choice, not a default born of convenience. Single-text CDA is well established in discourse studies when the aim is close interpretive depth at the moment a policy is introduced, rather than a generalizable claim about an outlet's coverage over time. This delimitation is acknowledged here, and its implications for generalizability are addressed in the Limitations section.

Secondary data consisted of four related Kompas.com articles published between 17 and 21 May 2025, along with the presidential regulation governing the program (Safitri & Carina, 2025; Ulya & Prabowo, 2025). These secondary materials were not coded line by line using the full three-dimensional model. Instead, they were read closely and used for contextual triangulation, to check whether patterns found in the primary article recurred or were contradicted elsewhere. This distinction between systematic coding of the primary text and contextual reading of secondary material is maintained throughout the analysis.

The analytical procedure followed Fairclough's three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice, treated as interconnected rather than strictly sequential. At the textual level, the article was read multiple times and coded clause by clause for lexicalization, modality, and transitivity. Transitivity coding identified the grammatical subject of each action-related clause and classified that social actor, whether the state, the Deputy Minister, or prospective students, as an active agent or a passive recipient. Modality coding identified specific markers, such as "will" or "highly," and classified each as deontic, expressing obligation, or

epistemic, expressing certainty. This explicit procedure allowed recurring patterns, such as the state's consistent positioning as an active agent, to be treated as a systematic textual feature rather than an impressionistic reading. The discursive practice stage then examined source selection and intertextual reference to the discontinued RSBI program, drawing on the secondary data to assess whether this pattern held across the broader coverage. The sociocultural stage situated these findings within Indonesia's educational policy landscape and the ideology of meritocracy.

Qualitative interpretation inevitably involves researcher judgment, so several measures supported the analysis's trustworthiness. Coding decisions for modality, transitivity, and lexical choice were independently reviewed by both authors, and disagreements were resolved by returning to the original wording until consensus was reached, serving as a form of investigator triangulation. Both authors approached the text as external observers, with no institutional tie to the program or to Kompas.com, which supports analytical distance while also meaning the readings offered remain one plausible interpretation rather than the only one. Throughout, interpretive claims were checked against the original text, and any claim not directly supported by a specific textual feature was revised or marked explicitly as inference.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Text Analysis: The Linguistic Construction of Inclusivity

The headline “Sekolah Garuda terbuka untuk siswa miskin, inklusif, dan tak zonasi” serves as the primary entry point into the construction of discourse. The three keywords it foregrounds, poor, inclusive, and not based on zoning, function together as a coordinated lexical strategy that produces a specific ideological effect, regardless of whether this effect was consciously intended by any individual writer or editor. Consistent with Fairclough's (1993) view that ideology operates through the structural effects of language rather than through authorial intent, this analysis treats these lexical choices as ideologically functional rather than as evidence of deliberate manipulation.

The term poor undergoes a process that CDA identifies as relexicalization, the rearticulation of an existing concept with a different semantic and ideological orientation. Where poverty is often represented in neoliberal discourse through stigmatizing labels, the term here is repositioned as a qualification that confers access advantages. This relexicalization, however, also has the effect of reducing the complexity of poverty to a single eligibility criterion for a scholarship scheme.

The word inclusive appears six times across the article: twice in the headline and subheading, three times in direct quotations attributed to Deputy Minister Stella Christie, and once in the closing paragraph summarizing the program's aims. In five of these six instances, inclusive functions predicatively, attached to the verb “to be” in constructions such as “this is a highly inclusive school,” rather than as a

descriptive modifier preceding a noun. This grammatical pattern matters analytically because predicative use packages inclusivity as an assertion to be affirmed or denied, inviting the reader toward agreement rather than inviting independent evaluation of the claim. The single instance of intensification, highly inclusive, occurs specifically in response to a question about whether the program was exclusive, signaling a strong affirmative modality and an active rhetorical move to preempt a counter-narrative.

The phrase not based on zoning is similarly significant because it juxtaposes two policy discourses ordinarily treated as complementary rather than contradictory. The zoning system was originally introduced as a government mechanism to promote educational equity by guaranteeing local access. By framing the Garuda School Program as free from this constraint, the text implicitly positions zoning as an obstacle to inclusivity, even though an equally plausible reading would treat zoning as a tool for achieving educational equality. This framing choice is not presented in the text as one interpretation among others; it is presented as settled fact, which is itself a feature of the high modality discussed next.

Modality analysis of the article reveals a strong predominance of affirmative, low-uncertainty constructions. The statement “80 percent of the students will receive scholarships” uses the modal verb “will” to express deontic certainty, presenting a future commitment as guaranteed rather than as a target or aspiration. The statement “the poorer the student, the greater the likelihood of admission” contains no explicit modal marker, but its declarative, present-tense construction performs an epistemic function, asserting the claim as an established fact about how the selection process operates rather than as a projected outcome still subject to evaluation. Fairclough (1993) argues that high modality of this kind serves an ideological function by naturalizing claims as unquestionable, and the near-total absence of hedging language anywhere in the article, no instances of “may,” “is expected to,” or “aims to” were found in relation to the program's core promises, supports this reading. For a program still in its early implementation stage, this pattern of unqualified certainty discourages readers from critically examining the policy's feasibility or sustainability.

Transitivity analysis, which examines who performs actions and who receives them within clause structures, surfaces the clearest and most consistent pattern in the text. Across the article, the state and its representatives are assigned the grammatical subject position in every clause describing a substantive action related to the program, while students are assigned the subject position only in clauses describing a state of being selected or admitted, never in clauses describing an action they themselves perform. The distribution of agency across the article's material process verbs is summarized below.

Table 1 Distribution of Grammatical Agency by Social Actor in the Primary News Text

Grammatical subject	Representative verbs	Number of clauses	Grammatical role
Garuda School Program / Government	opens, provides, ensures, ensures	4	Active agent
Deputy Minister Stella Christie	states, assures, denies, confirms	4	Active agent
Students (poor / marginalized)	are admitted, receive, benefit	3	Passive recipient

Source: Researchers Analysis (2025)

This distribution shows that the state occupies the active agent role in eight of eleven coded clauses concerning the program's operation, while students occupy only the passive recipient role and never the active agent role. This asymmetry reflects an unequal discursive relationship in which the state is constructed as a benevolent provider and disadvantaged citizens as passive beneficiaries. From a CDA perspective, this pattern functions to legitimize the state's protective role while obscuring the rights-based dimension of education: access to quality schooling is represented here as a benefit the state grants rather than as an entitlement the state is obligated to fulfill.

Discursive Practice: Text Production and Consumption

The discursive practice dimension of this text reveals a strongly dominant pattern of intertextuality concentrated around a single voice. Of the eleven direct and indirect quotations attributed to a named source in the article, ten originate from Deputy Minister Stella Christie, speaking at a media briefing held at the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology on 17 May 2025. The remaining quotation is attributed to an unnamed ministry spokesperson and substantively reiterates a claim Christie had already made. No quotation in the article originates from an independent education expert, an advocate for inclusive education, a civil society representative, or a prospective student from a marginalized background. This concentration of sourcing, rather than the vaguer impression that "nearly all" perspectives come from one source, constitutes what CDA identifies as discursive closure, a condition in which the textual space is effectively closed to perspectives that could challenge the dominant narrative.

A particularly notable intertextual reference within the article is its mention of the International Standard School Pilot Program, known by its Indonesian acronym RSBI, which was dissolved by the Constitutional Court in 2013 on the grounds that it had contributed to educational inequality. The article's invocation of RSBI functions rhetorically as a negative other, a discredited point of contrast against which the Garuda School Program appears more favorable by comparison. This is a recognizable strategy of dissociation, in which a new policy is legitimized

by distancing it from an unpopular predecessor rather than by independent justification on its own terms.

Examining the secondary Kompas.com coverage from the surrounding days confirms that this single-source pattern is not confined to the primary article but recurs across the outlet's reporting on the program throughout May 2025. Headlines such as “Deputy Minister Stella States That Garuda Schools Differ from RSBI: The Poorer the Student, the Greater the Chance of Admission” and “Deputy Minister Denies That the Garuda Excellence School Program Is Exclusive” exhibit a reactive-confirmatory style, in which the outlet primarily transmits and clarifies official statements rather than independently investigating their substance. This pattern bears some resemblance to what Herman and Chomsky (2010) describe as manufacturing consent, in which media institutions indirectly function as instruments of policy legitimation through routine professional practice rather than overt coercion. It is important to qualify this comparison carefully, however: Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model was developed from systematic analysis of media behavior across large corpora and institutions, and the evidence available in this study, drawn from a single article and a small set of related reports from one outlet, can support only a more modest claim. What can be said is that this case displays tendencies consistent with the dynamics the propaganda model describes, not that it demonstrates the model's operation at the scale the original framework was designed to capture.

Sociocultural Practice: Ideology and Power Relations

At the sociocultural level, the text reveals a fundamental ideological tension in which inclusivity is constructed on a meritocratic foundation. Inclusivity, as a discourse, promotes equal access to educational opportunity, while meritocracy presupposes selection based on demonstrated achievement, a mechanism that is inherently selective and therefore potentially exclusionary. According to the program's recruitment scheme as described in the related Kompas.com coverage examined as secondary data, admission to the Garuda School Program rests on two principal criteria: economic background and prior academic achievement. The economic criterion is designed to create access for students from low-income families, but the academic criterion still requires a demonstrated level of prior performance.

This matters because academic achievement is not randomly distributed across a population. It correlates strongly with access to quality prior schooling, parental support, supplementary tutoring, and broader forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011), all of which are unevenly distributed across social groups, a relationship more recently substantiated at scale by Batruch et al. (2023), whose multinational survey data show that belief in meritocratic selection systematically understates the role unequal starting points play in shaping who succeeds. Read against this evidence, the discourse that “the poorer the student, the greater the

likelihood of admission” functions as an ideological cover that presents a comforting narrative of fairness while leaving the structural mechanisms producing unequal academic preparation unexamined and unaddressed.

Sociocultural practice must also be understood in relation to Kompas.com's institutional position within Indonesia's media landscape. As part of the Kompas Gramedia Group, one of the country's largest media conglomerates, the outlet occupies a complex position within the relationships among capital, the state, and civil society, and its tendency to reproduce official governmental discourse in this instance of educational policy reporting can be read within that broader institutional context, where an appearance of neutrality can itself contribute to maintaining the status quo. The near-total absence of critical perspectives in the text can additionally be understood through Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony, in which domination operates not through coercion but through the manufacturing of consent. When an inclusivity narrative is accepted as self-evidently true without sustained public debate, the hegemonic standing of meritocratic ideology is correspondingly reinforced rather than questioned.

These findings carry several implications for how educational policy discourse should be read and produced. A discourse of inclusivity disseminated without critical scrutiny risks legitimizing policies that are not, in substance, inclusive. The reproduction of official discourse without alternative perspectives narrows the space available for what might be called discursive democracy, the arena within which civil society can evaluate and contest public policy. This points toward a distinction worth making explicit: procedural inclusivity, which guarantees equal opportunity to participate in a selection process, is not equivalent to substantive inclusivity, which requires that the underlying social conditions allow all participants to compete on genuinely equal terms. The Garuda School Program, as represented in this discourse, achieves the former more convincingly than the latter, and public debate about the program would benefit from a more nuanced framing than the one this news text provides.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that a single, highly visible piece of educational policy journalism can simultaneously promote and undermine inclusivity, not through contradiction at the level of explicit claims, but through the accumulated effect of lexical choice, modality, transitivity, and source selection working together. Theoretically, this contributes to Critical Discourse Analysis by demonstrating that Fairclough's three-dimensional model retains analytical power even when applied to a single, tightly bounded text, provided that each dimension is operationalized with enough precision, frequency counts for lexical recurrence, explicit modal categorization, and a systematic accounting of grammatical agency, to support claims that would otherwise remain impressionistic. The deeper theoretical

contribution is the demonstration that an inclusivity discourse and a meritocratic discourse are not merely compatible but can be mutually reinforcing: meritocratic selection borrows legitimacy from the language of inclusivity, while the language of inclusivity gains persuasive force from being attached to a selection mechanism that appears procedurally fair.

Practically, this matters for how educational policy is reported and read in Indonesia. When a news outlet relies on a single official source, frames a new policy against a discredited predecessor, and represents the state as an active, benevolent agent while citizens remain passive recipients, the resulting text narrows the space for public debate precisely at the moment such debate is most needed, when a policy is new and its consequences are not yet visible. For journalists and editors, this suggests that covering educational policy announcements responsibly requires actively seeking perspectives beyond the announcing institution, even when those perspectives complicate an otherwise clean narrative. For policymakers and the public, it suggests that the presence of inclusive language in a policy's framing should not be mistaken for evidence of inclusive outcomes, since procedural fairness in selection and substantive fairness in opportunity are distinct claims that require separate scrutiny.

It is also worth being candid about what a single text can and cannot establish. Because this analysis centers on one primary article, supplemented by a small set of related reports from the same outlet, its findings speak to how this particular text constructs inclusivity rather than to how Kompas.com, or Indonesian media more broadly, covers educational policy as a general matter. A close reading of this kind buys interpretive depth at the cost of breadth, and it remains an open question whether the pattern identified here is a narrower editorial choice or a more entrenched convention in Indonesian education reporting. Extending this analysis to a wider corpus, and pairing it with audience reception research on how readers actually interpret inclusivity claims, would be a natural next step in answering that question.

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