

Implementation of the Policy for Guidance of School Dropouts: Between Policy Design and Implementation Practices (Study at the UPTD PSRAMPK Indralaya)

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the dropout child development policy does not always follow the established policy design. In practice, limited resources, institutional capacity, and the needs of target groups can lead to adjustments in implementation. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Dropout Child Development Policy at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) by examining the relationship between policy design and implementation practices and identifying the types of adjustments that occur in the field. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively and data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model and Merilee S. Grindle's policy implementation model, which includes Content of Policy, Context of Implementation, and Outcomes. The results indicate that the program has generally run quite well and provided benefits in the form of increased skills, independence, and social functioning of participants. However, gaps were found in the recruitment mechanism, service capacity, integration of equivalency education, and post-development support. These gaps are primarily influenced by limitations in budget, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and service capacity. Implementers responded to these conditions through adaptation and cross-sector collaboration to ensure the program continued running. These findings demonstrate that implementation gaps are not always a sign of policy failure, but can instead be a form of organizational adaptation to real-world conditions.

Keywords: *Policy Implementation, School Dropout Children Development Implementation Gap, Merilee S. Grindle.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right of every citizen, guaranteed by the constitution, and is a crucial instrument for human resource development. However, the issue of school dropouts remains a challenge faced by various regions in Indonesia. The high number of out-of-school children (ATS) indicates that significant segments of society still lack access to sustainable education. This situation not only impacts the quality of human resources but also increases social vulnerability, unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion, necessitating comprehensive policy intervention.

As a form of policy intervention, the government has developed various social rehabilitation and development programs for school dropouts. One implementation is the School Dropout Development Policy, implemented through the Indralaya Social Rehabilitation Institution for Children Needing Special Protection (PSRAMPK) in South Sumatra Province. This policy aims not only to improve participants' job skills but also to build their independence, social functioning, and readiness to return to their role in society.

However, policy implementation at the implementation level does not always follow the established policy design. In practice, implementing organizations often face limitations in resources, institutional capacity, and the dynamics of beneficiary needs, which encourage various forms of implementation adjustments. Therefore, it is important to understand how policy design translates into program implementation practices at the implementation level.

The Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) is an institution that plays a strategic role in implementing the Out-of-School Development Program in South Sumatra Province. Based on initial observations, the program has been able to provide benefits in the form of improved skills, mental and social development, and increased participant independence. However, the study also found several implementation adjustments, such as participant recruitment mechanisms, limited service capacity, the lack of equivalency education, and changes in the form of post-development support. These adjustments indicate that policy implementation is influenced by the empirical conditions faced by the implementing organization.

Previous studies on school dropouts have generally focused on the factors causing dropout, the effectiveness of skills training, and the evaluation of social rehabilitation policies. Research examining the relationship between policy design and implementation practices in government social rehabilitation institutions is relatively limited. Yet, understanding the implementation process is crucial to explaining how policies are translated into concrete actions by implementing organizations.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the School Dropout Development Policy at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) by examining the relationship between policy design and implementation practices in

the field. Furthermore, this study also identifies various implementation adjustments that emerged during the policy's implementation and the factors influencing them.

Theoretical review

Policy implementation is a crucial stage in the public policy process because it is at this stage that formulated objectives and provisions are translated into concrete actions. Implementation is not only related to implementers' compliance with formal provisions, but also involves an interactive process between the policy substance, the implementing organization, resources, and the environment in which the policy is implemented. Therefore, successful implementation is determined not only by the quality of the policy design but also by the implementers' ability to translate the policy into reality.

During implementation, policies may undergo adjustments when faced with empirical conditions that differ from the assumptions made at the formulation stage. Resource limitations, target group characteristics, organizational capacity, and the interests of involved actors can influence how policies are translated into practice. Therefore, implementation studies need to consider not only the alignment between implementation and formal provisions, but also the adaptation processes undertaken by implementing organizations to achieve policy objectives.

This study uses Merilee S. Grindle's policy implementation model because it allows for implementation analysis by considering the relationship between policy content and the context in which the policy is implemented. Grindle divides implementation factors into the dimensions of Policy Content and Implementation Context, which in turn relate to the outcomes obtained from policy implementation.

In this study, the Content of Policy dimension is used to see how the design of the policy for fostering school dropouts determines the target group, the benefits to be provided, the expected changes, decision-making authority, policy implementers, and the resources provided to support implementation.

The Context of Implementation dimension is used to see how the power, interests and strategies of actors, institutional characteristics, and the level of compliance and responsiveness of implementers influence the process of translating policies into practice.

The Outcomes dimension is used to see the results that emerge after the policy is implemented, especially the changes experienced by program participants in the aspects of skills, independence, and social functioning.

Merilee S. Grindle's policy implementation model is relevant for this study because it explains the relationship between policy design and the actual conditions in the implementation of the Dropout Child Development Policy at the Indralaya PSRAMPK UPTD. This model not only examines implementation from the aspect of compliance with regulations but also considers the characteristics of the policy content, institutional context, implementer capacity, resource availability, and the results obtained by the target group.

The Grindle model used in this study is aimed at analyzing how development policy design translates into implementation practices. The Content of Policy dimension is used to examine program objectives, benefits provided, expected changes, division of authority, program implementers, and available resources. The Context of Implementation dimension is used to understand how organizational characteristics, inter-actor relationships, coordination, and implementer responsiveness influence policy implementation. Meanwhile, the Outcomes dimension is used to examine the impact of policy implementation on participants' skills, independence, and social functioning.

Grindle's framework is also crucial to this research because implementation practices demonstrate conditions that are not entirely identical to policy design. These differences do not necessarily indicate policy failure, but can be a consequence of the process of translating policy into field conditions. Limitations in budget, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and service capacity can force implementing organizations to make adjustments in program implementation. In this context, Grindle's model helps explain how the gap between policy design and implementation practices can be understood through the interaction between policy content, implementation context, and available resources.

Thus, Grindle's model serves as an analytical foundation to understand that policy implementation is a dynamic process. The success of a policy is determined not only by the quality of its design but also by the implementing organization's ability to translate the policy, manage resource constraints, coordinate with other actors, and generate benefits for the target group. This framework serves as the basis for analyzing how the policy for fostering dropouts is implemented at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) and explains the gaps that arise between policy design and implementation practices.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive approach. This approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation process of the school dropout guidance policy, specifically how the policy design translates into practical implementation at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD). This approach allowed researchers to gain insight into implementation conditions, adjustments made by implementers, and factors influencing the alignment between the designed policy and its implementation in the field.

The research location is the UPTD for Child Rehabilitation Social Services, Marsudi Putra and Women's Workplace (PSRAMPK) Indralaya, South Sumatra Province. The unit of analysis in this study is the implementation of the Dropout Child Development Policy at the UPTD PSRAMPK Indralaya. The selection of the research location is based on the consideration that the UPTD PSRAMPK Indralaya is an implementing unit that provides development services for dropouts through skills development activities as well as mental and social development.

Research informants were selected purposively based on their involvement and knowledge of program implementation. The informants included the Head of the Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD), the Head of the Social Rehabilitation Section, the Head of the Administration Subdivision, skills instructors, program participants, alumni, and participants' families. The selection of informants was intended to obtain diverse perspectives on policy design, implementation processes, resource conditions, participant experiences, and program outcomes.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with research informants regarding the implementation of the Dropout Children Development Policy, participant recruitment mechanisms, implementation of development, resource availability, coordination with other parties, and program outcomes for participants. Secondary data were obtained through a review of documents related to program implementation, including regulations, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), organizational structures, Decrees of the Head of UPTD, activity schedules, participant data, evaluation reports, activity documentation, and alumni monitoring data.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to obtain information on the experiences, perspectives, and practices of actors involved in policy implementation. Observations were made of the condition of facilities and infrastructure, the implementation of skills development activities, mental and social development, the involvement of instructors and implementers, and the environmental conditions of the Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD). Meanwhile, documentation was used to strengthen the information from interviews and observations through various documents related to program implementation.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. In the data condensation stage, information from interviews, observations, and documentation was selected, focused, and grouped based on research themes. Next, the data was presented in the form of thematic descriptions to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships between findings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and continuous verification by comparing various data sources obtained during the research.

The analysis of policy implementation in this study uses Merilee S. Grindle's policy implementation model, which includes Policy Content, Implementation Context, and Outcomes. These three dimensions are used to analyze how policy characteristics and design are translated into practice, how organizational context and resources influence implementation, and how implementation outcomes are perceived by target groups. The use of this model also allows the study to identify gaps between policy design and implementation practices and explain the types of adjustments made by implementers to address conditions on the ground.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Design of a Policy for Guidance for School Dropouts

The Dropout Children Development Program at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) essentially has a policy design that provides a clear direction for program implementation. The program targets dropouts as a target group by providing mental and social development and skills training to enhance their independence and social functioning. The research results indicate that the program's objectives, benefits provided, decision-making mechanisms, and the division of implementing roles have a clear structure. Program implementation is also supported by instructors and staff who carry out their duties according to their respective functions. These conditions indicate that in terms of Policy Content, the policy design has substance relevant to the objectives of developing dropout children.

However, the policy design has not been fully translated into practical implementation. The differences between design and practice are particularly evident in recruitment mechanisms, service coverage, participant education, and post-coaching support. Thus, the policy implementation in this study demonstrates that the policy design serves as a normative framework, while implementers in the field must translate it according to organizational capacity and available resources. Grindle's perspective helps explain that successful implementation is determined not only by the clarity of policy content but also by the implementer's ability to operationalize the policy in a concrete implementation context.

4.2 Adjustment of Participant Recruitment Mechanism

One gap between policy design and implementation practices is found in the participant recruitment mechanism. Based on the Standard Operating Procedures for Out-of-School Youth Services, the initial approach to prospective participants should involve observation, orientation, consultation, identification, motivation, and selection, with the involvement of the Regency/City Social Services as partners in the outreach and target selection process. However, research results indicate that in practice, the recruitment process in some cases also developed through information from the community, families, and alumni who were already aware of the existence of the Indralaya PSRAMPK UPTD.

This situation indicates an adjustment of the implementation mechanism to field conditions. These adjustments do not merely indicate non-compliance with the policy design, but can be understood as an implementing strategy to maintain the continuity of the participant admission process under conditions of limited service capacity. The number of out-of-school children requiring services is relatively greater than the capacity of the UPTD (Regional Technical Implementation Unit). Therefore, the recruitment mechanism cannot always be implemented as widely as envisioned in the policy design.

These findings demonstrate the importance of the Context of Implementation aspect in Grindle's model. Policy implementation takes place within institutional conditions with limited

capacity, requiring implementers to make adjustments to established mechanisms. Therefore, the gap between design and practice in the recruitment aspect is more accurately understood as a form of implementation adaptation influenced by organizational capacity, rather than simply a failure of policy implementation.

4.3 Service Capacity Gap

Limited service capacity was also a key finding in the implementation of the Out-of-School Guidance Policy. The Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) has staff and instructors to support guidance activities, but the number of available human resources remains limited. This limitation forces some employees to perform multiple duties to ensure all service activities can continue. Furthermore, participant capacity is also a limitation in expanding the program's reach to out-of-school children in need of guidance.

The condition of facilities and infrastructure also indicates limited service capacity. The study found that some practical equipment was inadequate or damaged, while several building facilities required repairs. However, these limitations have not led to the program's termination. Implementers continue to utilize available facilities and optimize resources through internal coordination and collaboration with other parties.

When analyzed using Grindle's concept of Resources Committed, this situation demonstrates that resources are a crucial factor explaining the discrepancy between policy design and implementation practices. Programs generally continue to operate because basic resources are still available, but resource limitations prevent implementation from reaching optimal levels. Thus, the primary implementation problem lies not in a lack of commitment from implementers, but rather in the limited capacity available to translate the policy design effectively.

4.4 Skills Development and Needs for Equivalency Education

Implementation practices also revealed a gap between the available forms of training and participants' needs. The program provided benefits in the form of skills training and mental and social development. These activities provided participants with the necessary skills for employment or independent business development. However, research findings indicate that participants' needs extend beyond job skills to accessing formal education or equivalent education.

As of the research's conclusion, the mentoring program had not been fully integrated with equivalent education through collaboration with educational institutions, such as Package A, Package B, or Package C. Consequently, the program's benefits were still predominantly focused on improving job skills, while participants' need for educational recognition had not been fully addressed. This situation indicates a gap between the needs of the target group and the types of services available.

These findings can be linked to the Type of Benefits and Extent of Change Envisioned aspects of Policy Content. The program has provided tangible benefits in the form of skills and

social development, but the expected changes for dropouts will be more comprehensive if skills development is accompanied by meeting educational needs. Therefore, developing equivalency education is one aspect that can strengthen the relevance of policy design to the needs of beneficiaries.

4.5 Post-Coaching Support Shift

Another gap was identified in the support provided after participants completed the program. During the initial period of the program, participants who completed the training received assistance with work equipment related to their chosen skill area as initial capital for developing independence. However, research has shown that this assistance has ceased in recent years.

These changes impact the continuity of program benefits, as participants no longer receive the material support that previously helped them apply their skills after completing the training. However, research shows that some alumni are still able to utilize the skills they acquired to run independent businesses. This suggests that the program's benefits are not entirely dependent on post-training support, as the skills acquired during the program can still serve as capital for participants in building independence. Some alumni have even been able to start independent businesses.

From a policy implementation perspective, these changes in post-mentoring support demonstrate that implementation practices can change depending on available resources. The cessation of work equipment assistance can be understood as a consequence of limited budgetary support, requiring organizations to prioritize viable service delivery. This situation also demonstrates the importance of post-mentoring strategies that rely not only on material assistance but also on strengthening access to internships, job placement, business development, and alumni mentoring.

4.6 Resources as the Main Explainer of the Implementation Gap

Various research findings indicate that resource limitations are a key factor explaining the gap between policy design and implementation practices. These limitations include budget, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and participant intake capacity. These conditions force implementers to prioritize services and make adjustments to program implementation. However, resource limitations do not cause program failure. The program continues to operate and provides benefits to its target groups.

These findings reinforce the relevance of the Resources Committed aspect of Grindle's model. The adequacy of resources not only determines whether a program can be implemented but also determines the extent to which program objectives can be optimally achieved. In the case of the Indralaya PSRAMPK UPTD, available resources were sufficient to maintain the program's sustainability, but were insufficient to expand service coverage, upgrade facilities, provide post-training support, and integrate equivalency education.

Thus, the implementation gaps identified in this study were not primarily due to weak commitment from implementers. Rather, implementers demonstrated efforts to optimize available resources through internal coordination, cross-sector collaboration, and adjustments to program implementation. This demonstrates that implementing organizations were not passive in the face of limitations but were instead employing adaptive strategies to ensure the program's primary objectives were achieved.

4.7 Implementation Adaptation through Cross-Sector Collaboration

Limited internal resources prompted the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) to develop collaborations with various parties. Research results indicate the involvement of various agencies and partners in supporting program implementation, including through coaching, material provision, support services, and participant internships. This collaboration is one of the organization's strategies to address limited internal resources and maintain service quality.

From the Context of Implementation perspective, cross-sector collaboration demonstrates that policy implementation is a process involving interactions between various actors. The South Sumatra Provincial Social Service plays a role in policy development and oversight, while the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) carries out the technical functions of program implementation. Furthermore, the involvement of other government agencies, educational institutions, and the business community provides support for the implementation of participant development and work experience activities.

This collaboration demonstrates that internal resource limitations can be compensated for by leveraging external resources. This strategy demonstrates organizational adaptation in translating policy design into practical implementation. Thus, implementation success is determined not only by the organization's internal resources but also by its ability to build networks and access resources from other actors.

4.8 Policy Implementation Outcomes

Despite some gaps between policy design and implementation practices, the program has generally yielded positive benefits for the target group. Research has shown improved skills, behavioral changes, increased self-confidence, and increased independence among participants following the program. These changes have also been positively received by their families and communities. Several alumni have been able to utilize the skills they acquired to start independent businesses, demonstrating that the program's benefits can continue after participants complete the training.

These findings indicate that implementation gaps do not automatically diminish the program's ability to achieve its primary objectives. Within the Grindle Outcomes framework, implementation success can be measured by the changes experienced by individuals and target groups and their acceptance of those changes. The mentoring program has provided skills and

social guidance that have contributed to increased independence and social functioning for participants.

Thus, the implementation of the Dropout Child Development Policy at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) can be understood as a dynamic process. The policy design provides direction and objectives, while implementation practices evolve through adjustments to organizational conditions, service capacity, and resource availability. The gaps identified in this study do not entirely indicate policy failure, but rather represent implementation adaptations undertaken to maintain service continuity. However, if these gaps persist without strengthening resources and developing program design, there is a risk that the program's benefits will not develop optimally and will not fully address the needs of dropouts comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Dropout Child Development Policy at the Indralaya PSRAMPK Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) has generally been quite successful and has had a positive impact, improving participants' skills, independence, and social functioning. However, implementation gaps remain between policy design and practice, particularly in recruitment mechanisms, limited service capacity, the lack of integration of equivalency education, and post-development support.

This gap is primarily influenced by limitations in budget, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and service capacity. Nevertheless, implementers adapt through cross-sector coordination and collaboration so that the program can continue to run and provide benefits to participants. These findings suggest that the implementation gap does not always reflect policy failure but can instead be a form of organizational adaptation in adapting policy design to real-world conditions.

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