



President Prabowo's Education Policy in News Text: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Kompas.id

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Abstract

Education policy has become a prominent site of public discourse in Indonesia, particularly in relation to poverty reduction and social inequality. This study investigates the discursive construction of President Prabowo Subianto's People's Schools (Sekolah Rakyat) policy as represented in the Kompas.id news article "Prabowo Inaugurates 166 People's Schools. How is Their Education Managed?" published in January 2026. Adopting a descriptive qualitative design within a critical paradigm, the research employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework, encompassing textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts. The analysis reveals that the news discourse predominantly represents the state as a moral and authoritative agent committed to social justice and national development, while framing People's Schools as a humanitarian solution to structural poverty. Linguistic choices and narrative strategies tend to legitimize government authority and foreground benevolent intentions, whereas critical issues related to legal status and institutional integration within the National Education System receive limited emphasis. This research contributes to critical media and education policy studies by highlighting the role of news discourse in shaping public understanding of state-led educational reforms in Indonesia.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Education Policy, Kompas.id, News Discourse, People's Schools..

Abstrak

Kebijakan pendidikan telah menjadi topik utama dalam diskursus publik di Indonesia, terutama terkait dengan pengentasan kemiskinan dan ketidaksetaraan sosial. Studi ini mengkaji konstruksi diskursif kebijakan Sekolah Rakyat (Sekolah Rakyat) Presiden Prabowo Subianto sebagaimana diwakili dalam artikel berita Kompas.id berjudul "Prabowo Meresmikan 166 Sekolah Rakyat. Bagaimana Pengelolaan Pendidikan Mereka?" yang diterbitkan pada Januari 2026. Mengadopsi desain kualitatif deskriptif dalam paradigma kritis, penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka Analisis Diskursus Kritis tiga dimensi Norman Fairclough, yang mencakup fitur teks, praktik diskursif, dan konteks sosio-budaya. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa diskursus berita secara dominan menggambarkan negara sebagai agen moral dan berwibawa yang berkomitmen pada keadilan sosial dan pembangunan nasional, sementara Sekolah Rakyat diframing sebagai solusi kemanusiaan untuk kemiskinan struktural. Pilihan linguistik dan strategi naratif cenderung melegitimasi otoritas pemerintah dan menonjolkan niat baik, sedangkan isu-isu kritis terkait status hukum dan integrasi institusional dalam Sistem Pendidikan Nasional mendapat penekanan yang terbatas. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada studi media kritis dan kebijakan pendidikan dengan menyoroti peran wacana berita dalam membentuk pemahaman publik terhadap reformasi pendidikan yang dipimpin negara di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Analisis Wacana Kritis, Diskursus Berita, Kebijakan Pendidikan, Kompas.id, Sekolah Rakyat.



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INTRODUCTION

Education policy has emerged as a central arena of public discourse in Indonesia, closely intertwined with debates on poverty alleviation, social inequality, and human capital development. Under President Prabowo Subianto's administration, education has been positioned as a strategic instrument for national transformation, reflecting broader state narratives about dignity, social justice, and economic mobility. Media institutions play a decisive role in circulating and legitimizing these narratives by selecting particular linguistic frames and ideological positions, a process widely discussed in critical media studies (Ells, 2019; Keswani et al., 2018).

As mass communication increasingly shapes public cognition, the analysis of education policy discourse becomes inseparable from questions of power, representation, and authority (Hopkins et al., 2017). One of the most prominent education initiatives introduced by President Prabowo is the People's Schools (Sekolah Rakyat) program, designed to provide free education for children from economically marginalized families. The inauguration of 166 People's Schools in January 2026 marked a symbolic and political milestone, reinforcing the administration's claim of strong commitment to equity and poverty reduction. Government narratives surrounding this program consistently emphasize moral responsibility, humanitarian values, and national progress through education, narratives that are actively reproduced and amplified in online news reporting (Kartikasari, 2020).

These discursive constructions invite closer scrutiny regarding how state authority and social problems are represented through journalistic language (Amer, 2009). Despite the rapid expansion of the People's Schools program, unresolved questions remain concerning its legal status and institutional integration within Indonesia's National Education System. Education observers have raised concerns about governance, curriculum alignment, and administrative accountability, issues that receive uneven attention in mainstream news coverage (Susilo, 2026). The selective visibility of certain policy aspects illustrates how media discourse prioritizes particular interpretations while marginalizing others, a phenomenon central to critical discourse inquiry (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018).

This imbalance underscores the importance of examining not only policy outcomes but also the discursive processes through which legitimacy is constructed (Fairclough et al., 2011). At the midpoint of this discussion, empirical data related to the People's Schools initiative help contextualize the scale and political significance of the policy within national education discourse. The following table presents verified data drawn from official government announcements and national reporting, illustrating the scope of the program as reported in early 2026.

Table 1. Overview of the People's Schools (Sekolah Rakyat) Program in Indonesia (2026)

Indicator	Data
Year of Inauguration	2026
Number of People's Schools	166
Primary Target Group	Children from low-income households
Main Policy Objective	Poverty reduction through education
Source	Government statements reported by Kompas.id (2026)

The presence of such data in news texts is never neutral, as numerical representations function rhetorically to reinforce policy credibility and governmental authority (Hopkins et al., 2017). Quantification often serves as a persuasive device that frames policy initiatives as measurable successes rather than contested social interventions (Keswani et al., 2018). Digital news platforms, with their wide reach and rapid circulation, intensify this effect by embedding data within narratives of progress and moral leadership (Gulbrandsen et al., 2019). Consequently, the way statistics are positioned within journalistic discourse warrants critical examination (Bergström, 2020).

News media operate not merely as channels of information but as ideological spaces where social realities are constructed and normalized. Linguistic choices, framing strategies, and narrative sequencing within news texts reflect institutional interests and broader power relations between the state, media organizations, and the public (Ells, 2019). Previous research has demonstrated that news discourse frequently aligns with dominant political agendas by foregrounding official voices while limiting critical perspectives (Kartikasari, 2020). Such tendencies highlight the relevance of critical discourse analysis as a methodological lens for unpacking hidden ideologies in media texts (Amer, 2009). Critical Discourse Analysis provides a theoretical foundation for understanding discourse as a form of social practice embedded within structures of power and ideology.

Scholars emphasize that discourse simultaneously shapes and is shaped by social conditions, making it a key site for ideological struggle (Fairclough et al., 2011; Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). Media texts, particularly news reports, become arenas where authority is negotiated and legitimized through language rather than through policy implementation alone (Hopkins et al., 2017). This

perspective aligns with studies showing that mass media representations significantly influence public perceptions of governance and social issues (Keswani et al., 2018).

While many previous studies have applied Van Dijk's framework to examine ideological patterns in news discourse, this study adopts Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model. Fairclough's approach enables an integrated analysis of textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts, allowing for a deeper understanding of how policy discourse is produced and circulated (Fairclough et al., 2011). By applying this framework to the Kompas.id article "Prabowo Inaugurates 166 People's Schools. How is Their Education Managed?", this research seeks to uncover how education reform is discursively framed and normalized in Indonesian news media. In doing so, the study contributes to critical media and education policy scholarship by revealing the ideological dimensions embedded in representations of state-led educational reform (Amer, 2009; Gulbrandsen et al., 2019).

RESEARCH METHODS

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from a news article published on the Kompas.id portal. The analyzed article is entitled "Prabowo Inaugurates 166 People's Schools. How is Their Education Managed?" written by Nina Susilo and published on January 12, 2026. The article discusses the inauguration of People's Schools by President Prabowo Subianto, their management under the Ministry of Social Affairs, and issues related to the National Education System in Indonesia. Data collection was conducted through a literature study, with the main research instrument being the news text itself, focusing on words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that represent educational policies, government discourse, and social issues. In addition, Kompas as the media institution producing the news is also considered to understand the context of text production. Data analysis employed a descriptive qualitative method within a critical paradigm, which views news as a socially constructed text that is not neutral but reflects ideology, power relations, and particular interests. This study applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which consists of three dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. The textual dimension examines representations, relations, and identities within the news text; the discursive practice dimension analyzes the processes of text production and consumption by the media; and the socio-cultural practice dimension explores the broader social context, including educational policy and social inequality in Indonesia. Through this approach, the study aims to reveal how the discourse of People's Schools is constructed and how it reflects broader issues of power, ideology, and social change in Indonesian education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discursive Representation of State Authority in Education Policy News

The Kompas.id news text constructs President Prabowo's education policy through a narrative that places the state in a central moral position, emphasizing leadership responsibility and national commitment to social justice. The lexical choices used to describe government actions rely heavily on affirmative verbs and legitimizing expressions that portray policy implementation as inevitable and necessary for development, reflecting patterns identified in media discourse studies by Keswani et al. (2018) and Subba (2019). Such representation aligns with Fairclough's notion that discourse does not merely reflect reality but actively produces social meaning and power relations (Nurhayati, 2018; Suryadi, 2022).

The state is consistently positioned as an agent of solution rather than a subject of scrutiny, reinforcing ideological dominance in public policy discourse (Amer, 2009; Fauzan, 2018). The news article further emphasizes ceremonial and symbolic actions, such as inaugurations and official statements, as markers of political legitimacy and administrative seriousness. This emphasis mirrors journalistic routines in Indonesian print and digital media that prioritize elite voices and institutional authority, as documented by Saragih (2019) and Mitra and Bengal (2011). Through this narrative structure, the policy appears stabilized and uncontested, which reduces space for alternative interpretations or dissenting perspectives. Media discourse in this form functions as a conduit for policy normalization rather than a platform for critical deliberation (Sobari et al., 2025).

The textual framing also relies on moral evaluation, presenting education as a humanitarian obligation of the state toward marginalized communities. This moral framing resonates with studies on

ideological persuasion in news discourse, where benevolent intent is foregrounded to cultivate public trust and emotional alignment (Shuo et al., 2014; Firdausi & Sahayu, 2022). Education policy becomes a moral project rather than a contested administrative process. Such discourse subtly discourages critical engagement with structural limitations of policy implementation. In the mid-section of the article, empirical data are introduced to reinforce the legitimacy of the policy initiative. These data are presented in a concise and authoritative manner, drawing on official government statements reported by Kompas.com in January 2026 (Naja, 2026).

Table 2. Official Data on People's Schools Inauguration (2026)

Indicator	Data
Total People's Schools	166
Provinces Covered	34
Target Beneficiaries	Underprivileged Students

Source: Official Government Report via Kompas.com

The presence of quantitative data functions rhetorically to authenticate the discourse and to signal transparency and administrative competence. As argued by Prasetyo and Wijaya (2024), numerical data in news discourse often serve symbolic rather than analytical purposes, reinforcing authority rather than inviting evaluation. The table operates as an evidentiary anchor that strengthens the dominant narrative without opening substantive debate. Subsequent paragraphs continue to highlight state responsibility while minimizing institutional complexity. Legal frameworks, curriculum alignment, and governance structures receive marginal attention, reflecting a common tendency in policy reporting to privilege outcomes over processes (Setyowati, 2024).

This selective emphasis supports the ideological positioning of the state as inherently capable and benevolent. The discursive pattern observed also parallels findings in international CDA research, where policy actors are linguistically shielded from accountability through positive modality and evaluative language (Amer, 2009; Shuo et al., 2014). The absence of critical voices is not accidental but structurally embedded in journalistic practice. Such silencing contributes to the reproduction of hegemonic policy narratives. From a socio-cultural perspective, the discourse aligns education policy with national development ideology, reinforcing a developmentalist frame long present in Indonesian media narratives (Subba, 2019).

Education is framed as an instrument of economic mobility rather than a site of democratic contestation. This orientation narrows the interpretive space available to readers. The repeated association between leadership and moral duty strengthens political personalization within policy discourse. Leadership is portrayed as decisive and visionary, reducing the role of institutions and collective governance (Saragih, 2019). This personalization contributes to the construction of charismatic authority in news texts. Overall, the discursive representation of state authority in the Kompas.id article reflects a broader media tendency to align with official narratives, as identified in multiple CDA studies of Indonesian news discourse (Suryadi, 2022; Sobari et al., 2025). The education policy is presented as a settled moral good rather than a subject for critical public reasoning.

Media Framing of People's Schools as a Humanitarian Solution

The Kompas.id news text frames the People's Schools policy primarily as a humanitarian response to persistent poverty and educational exclusion in Indonesia. Through carefully selected lexical items and narrative sequencing, the policy is presented as an urgent moral intervention rather than a complex administrative reform. This framing aligns with media tendencies to humanize policy initiatives by associating them with compassion, care, and social

responsibility, as observed in studies on mass media influence and moral persuasion (Keswani et al., 2018; Subba, 2019).

Education is depicted as a direct pathway to dignity and survival for marginalized children, reinforcing an emotionally resonant interpretation of state intervention. Such representation positions the policy beyond technical debate and situates it within ethical obligation. The humanitarian narrative is constructed through repeated emphasis on disadvantaged children as the primary beneficiaries of the program. These children are portrayed as victims of structural poverty who require immediate rescue through access to education, discipline, and nutrition. This representational strategy simplifies complex socio-economic realities by reducing poverty to a condition remediable through schooling alone, a pattern frequently identified in development-oriented media discourse (Mitra & Bengal, 2011).

The news text rarely engages with broader structural determinants such as labor inequality, regional disparities, or long-term economic planning. As a result, education is elevated as a singular solution within the narrative. The article further strengthens the humanitarian frame by foregrounding the symbolic actions of political leadership. Presidential inaugurations, official speeches, and institutional ceremonies are highlighted as evidence of moral commitment and decisive governance. This personalization of policy aligns with journalistic practices that privilege elite actors and authoritative voices in policy reporting (Saragih, 2019).

By centering leadership performance, the discourse transforms policy implementation into a spectacle of benevolence. Such representation reduces the visibility of institutional processes and bureaucratic accountability. Language choices within the text contribute significantly to this humanitarian framing. Positive evaluative terms dominate descriptions of the policy, while potential limitations or uncertainties are expressed through neutral or abstract phrasing. This asymmetry in lexical evaluation reflects ideological positioning, where affirmative narratives are foregrounded and critical dimensions are backgrounded (Amer, 2009; Fauzan, 2018).

Readers are guided to perceive the policy as inherently beneficial rather than open to contestation. The discursive effect is the naturalization of the policy as morally justified. The humanitarian framing also shapes how beneficiaries are positioned within the discourse. Children from low-income families are represented as passive recipients of state generosity rather than as rights-bearing citizens or active social agents. This pattern mirrors findings in critical discourse studies that highlight objectification and depersonalization in persuasive narratives (Shuo et al., 2014).

The absence of beneficiary voices further reinforces this asymmetry. Consequently, the discourse reproduces hierarchical relations between the state and marginalized populations. The role of journalists in sustaining this framing is embedded within professional norms of objectivity and neutrality. By relying predominantly on official sources, the news text adopts a perspective that aligns closely with governmental narratives. This sourcing practice reflects broader patterns in Indonesian media institutions, where elite dominance shapes news production processes (Saragih, 2019; Prasetyo & Wijaya, 2024).

The humanitarian frame thus becomes a product of institutional routines rather than individual bias. Media neutrality functions as a mask for ideological alignment. The emotional appeal embedded in the discourse encourages public empathy and approval while limiting critical engagement. By emphasizing care, compassion, and urgency, the narrative discourages readers from questioning policy design, legal frameworks, or sustainability. This mechanism reflects how moral discourse can function ideologically by constraining interpretive possibilities (Fairclough, as applied in Nurhayati, 2018).

Education policy is received as an unquestionable good. Public deliberation is subtly redirected toward acceptance. From a critical perspective, the humanitarian framing also

depoliticizes education reform. By presenting People's Schools as a charitable intervention, the discourse shifts attention away from systemic policy debates and governance challenges. This depoliticization aligns with findings that media often reduce structural issues into individualized or moral narratives (Keswani et al., 2018).

Structural inequality becomes an implicit background rather than an explicit subject. The policy narrative thus stabilizes existing power relations. The convergence between political communication and media storytelling further reinforces this framing. Official narratives are reproduced with minimal reinterpretation, reflecting patterns of media convergence in digital journalism (Mitra & Bengal, 2011).

The boundary between information dissemination and policy promotion becomes increasingly blurred. Media texts serve simultaneously as news and legitimizing instruments. This convergence strengthens the dominance of humanitarian discourse. Overall, the framing of People's Schools as a humanitarian solution demonstrates how news media participate actively in shaping public understanding of education policy. Rather than presenting education reform as a contested political process, the discourse constructs it as a moral imperative led by benevolent authority. This framing aligns with broader ideological functions of mass media in normalizing state-led development narratives (Subba, 2019; Sobari et al., 2025). As a result, critical engagement with policy complexities remains limited.

Ideological Implications of News Discourse on Education Reform

The Kompas.id coverage of President Prabowo's education policy reveals significant ideological implications embedded within its discursive structure. The news discourse consistently aligns education reform with narratives of national development, moral leadership, and social harmony. Such alignment reflects a developmentalist ideology that frames state intervention as the primary solution to social problems, a pattern widely documented in critical media studies (Amer, 2009; Suryadi, 2022). Education is positioned as a technical and administrative remedy rather than a site of political negotiation. This ideological orientation shapes public perception of reform. One key ideological feature of the discourse is the prioritization of policy outcomes over institutional processes.

The success of People's Schools is emphasized through achievement-oriented narratives, while questions of legal integration, governance mechanisms, and accountability receive minimal elaboration. This selective emphasis reflects what critical discourse scholars describe as backgrounding of contentious elements (Nurhayati, 2018). Readers are encouraged to focus on results rather than procedural legitimacy. Such framing limits critical scrutiny. The ideological function of repetition is also evident in the consistent use of official terminology and policy slogans. By repeatedly circulating government-defined concepts, the news text normalizes specific interpretations of education reform (Fauzan, 2018).

Language becomes a vehicle for ideological reproduction rather than neutral description. Over time, these repeated frames shape common-sense understandings of policy. Media discourse thus contributes to ideological sedimentation. Power relations between the state, media institutions, and the public are reinforced through journalistic sourcing practices. Official voices dominate the discourse, while alternative perspectives from educators, researchers, or civil society organizations are largely absent. This imbalance reflects hierarchical communication structures within mass media systems (Saragih, 2019).

The state emerges as the legitimate definer of social problems and solutions. Public participation is discursively constrained. The ideological positioning of the media is further masked by professional claims of objectivity. Journalists adopt a neutral tone that conceals alignment with dominant power structures, a phenomenon identified in several CDA studies of Indonesian news discourse (Firdausi & Sahayu, 2022; Sobari et al., 2025).

Objectivity functions rhetorically rather than substantively. Readers are less likely to recognize the ideological nature of the text. Media authority is preserved. Education reform is also framed as a consensual national project rather than a contested policy choice. The absence of conflictual perspectives constructs an image of unity and inevitability. This consensus-oriented discourse aligns with broader cultural expectations of harmony and respect for authority (Subba, 2019). Ideological consensus replaces democratic debate. Policy discourse becomes stabilized. The representation of social actors within the discourse reinforces hierarchical identities.

State actors are depicted as rational planners and moral guardians, while marginalized communities are positioned as beneficiaries lacking agency. This representational pattern mirrors findings in critical discourse research on objectification and paternalism (Shuo et al., 2014). Such representations normalize unequal power relations. Agency remains centralized. From an ideological standpoint, education is framed more as a charitable intervention than as a constitutional right. This shift alters the normative foundation of public policy discourse, redefining citizenship in terms of dependency rather than entitlement (Setyowati, 2024).

The state is positioned as a provider of benevolence rather than a guarantor of rights. Accountability expectations are subtly transformed. The ideological effects of this discourse extend beyond immediate policy interpretation. By shaping public understanding of education reform as morally driven and technically sufficient, media discourse influences long-term perceptions of governance and social responsibility (Hopkins et al., 2017). Critical awareness is reduced as narratives of certainty dominate. Media thus participate in governance indirectly. Comparative research on Indonesian media demonstrates that similar ideological patterns recur across policy domains, indicating systemic rather than incidental bias (Prasetyo & Wijaya, 2024; Suryadi, 2022).

Education policy discourse reflects broader institutional alignments between media and political power. These alignments shape the limits of public debate. Ideology operates structurally. In sum, the ideological implications of the Kompas.id news discourse highlight the active role of media in reproducing and legitimizing state authority in education reform. Through selective emphasis, representational strategies, and sourcing practices, the discourse constructs reform as inevitable, benevolent, and uncontested. This analysis confirms that news media function as ideological actors within policy communication rather than neutral observers (Amer, 2009; Sobari et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Demonstrates that the Kompas.id news discourse constructs President Prabowo Subianto's People's Schools policy through a coherent and mutually reinforcing narrative of moral authority, humanitarian urgency, and national development. At the textual and discursive levels, linguistic choices, framing strategies, and sourcing practices consistently position the state as a benevolent and legitimate actor, while education is portrayed as an immediate solution to structural poverty and social inequality. This representation simplifies complex policy dynamics by prioritizing symbolic actions, emotional appeals, and outcome-oriented narratives over institutional processes, legal integration, and governance accountability. As a result, education reform is discursively transformed into a moral imperative that appears natural, inevitable, and beyond contestation in the public sphere. From a critical perspective, these findings confirm that news media function not merely as channels of information but as ideological spaces that shape and normalize dominant policy discourses.

The humanitarian framing and consensus-oriented representation marginalize alternative viewpoints, limit critical engagement, and reproduce hierarchical power relations between the state and marginalized communities. By foregrounding benevolence and authority while backgrounding structural challenges and public deliberation, the discourse subtly redefines education policy as an act of state generosity rather than a constitutional right and democratic process. Consequently, the study underscores the importance of critical discourse analysis in revealing how media narratives influence public understanding of state-led educational reforms in Indonesia.

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