

Government Public Communication Management Strategy in Socializing the People's School Policy in Indonesia

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Abstract. The People's School Policy—a free, boarding-based education program for low-income families. The success of this policy depends heavily on the effectiveness of information delivery, public acceptance, and community participation. This study aims to analyze the public communication management strategies implemented by the government in its outreach. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. The results indicate that the government implemented a mixed-method communication strategy, combining direct face-to-face outreach (a community approach) and the use of digital media (social media/websites) for information transparency. The results indicate that the government implemented a single narrative strategy of "Education for All" to maintain information consistency across ministries (Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and Ministry of State Secretariat). The implementation strategy was carried out through multi-platform channels that combined social media for the wider public with face-to-face communication and the use of regional languages for communities in remote areas. In addition, issue management through rapid responses through official complaint channels and strategic collaboration with universities were key factors in building public trust. This study concludes that the integration of digital channels and a local humanist approach is effective in expanding the reach of policies, although synchronizing technical data between the central and regional governments remains a managerial challenge that needs to be optimized to achieve the target of 500 schools by 2029.

Keywords: *Public Communication Management, People's Schools, Education Policy, Socialization, Government.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation for developing globally competitive human resources (Kumala et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the right to education is guaranteed by the constitution as a means of enhancing the nation's intellectual development (Hapsari et al., 2022). However, significant challenges remain in the national education system, particularly regarding the unequal access between urban communities and those in remote areas or lower-income groups. This situation demands revolutionary policies to ensure that every child receives equal learning opportunities (Suryana, 2021).

The Indonesian government responded to this challenge by launching the "People's School" policy. This policy was designed as a concrete solution to provide affordable, even free, quality education to segments of society that have been excluded from the formal education system due to financial constraints (Lesmana, 2025). As a strategic program, People's Schools focuses not only on physical school construction but also on transforming the curriculum to reflect local needs and improving the competency of local educators (Ibnu & Kurniawan, 2025).

The People's School (SR) is a free boarding school education program initiated by President Prabowo Subianto and launched on January 12, 2026, with the primary goal of providing access to quality formal education for children from extremely poor families, including school dropouts and street children (Sari et al., 2025). This program targets community groups in deciles 1 and 2 with a boarding-based approach, thus providing not only elementary through high school education but also ensuring students' daily living needs.

Furthermore, the People's School is equipped with comprehensive facilities such as student dormitories, housing for teaching staff, a mosque, and a multi-purpose building (Hafidzi & Irawan, 2025). The educational approach implemented is holistic, encompassing academic aspects, character building, life skills, and health. Interestingly, the student admission system is not conducted through general registration, but rather through direct outreach to children in genuine need, such as former buskers, beggars, or scavengers, as a concrete effort to break the cycle of poverty (Rizqillah & Ulum, 2025).

However, the success of a public policy is determined not only by the substance of the program itself, but also by how it is communicated to the public (Syahrudin, 2019). Often, well-intentioned policies fail to be implemented due to misperceptions or resistance at the grassroots level. This is where public communication management plays a crucial role as an information bridge between the government, as policymakers, and the public, as beneficiaries (Subianto, 2020).

Currently, the challenges of government public communication are increasingly complex with the rapid development of information technology (Eko Wahyunto, 2025). On the one hand, digitalization facilitates the massive dissemination of information; on the other hand, the risk of information distortion and hoaxes can easily damage the image of the People's School policy before the program is fully implemented. Without a measurable communication strategy, the public may become skeptical of the program's effectiveness, or even perceive it as merely an unrealistic political promise (Lase et al., 2025).

The government's public communication management in promoting People's Schools must encompass aspects ranging from thorough planning to consistent message monitoring. The government needs to map all the stakeholders involved, from parents of students and religious leaders to village officials in remote areas. Synchronizing the narrative between the central and regional governments is crucial to avoid conflicting information that could confuse communities on the ground (Kamsar & Jamal, 2025).

Field observations indicate that the dissemination of education policies is often one-way and bureaucratic. This approach often ignores the diverse characteristics of audiences in each region. In the context of the People's School (Sekolah Rakyat), a more humanistic and participatory communication approach is needed, one in which the public feels involved in the policy-making process, rather than simply being subjected to new, imposed regulations.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the public communication management strategies implemented by the government. The researchers believe it is necessary to evaluate the most effective communication channels used, how policy messages are packaged for ease of understanding, and how the government manages feedback mechanisms. A deeper understanding of these processes will provide insight into the extent to which communication is able to build public trust.

Based on this background, the study, "Government Public Communication Management Strategy in the Dissemination of the People's School Policy in Indonesia," is highly relevant. This research is expected to contribute academically to the development of government organizational communication science, while also providing practical evaluation material for policymakers in designing more effective, inclusive, and targeted dissemination strategies in the future.

B. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that is entirely sourced from secondary data or library research (. Data were collected from various official documents, such as academic manuscripts of the People's School policy, government public relations performance reports, press releases, and socialization content on official social media channels.

Researchers conducted observations of all digital communication artifacts and written documentation to dissect the communication management strategies that have been implemented by the government without conducting direct interviews. The analysis process was carried out through content analysis techniques by classifying data into the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of communication. The collected data were then filtered and presented narratively to find patterns in the socialization strategies used. To ensure the validity of the results, researchers applied data triangulation techniques by comparing information from various different document sources to ensure the consistency and validity of the research findings.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The government's public communications management strategy for promoting the People's School (SR) policy in Indonesia—a flagship program to break the cycle of poverty—focuses on a collaborative, transparent, and technology-based approach to achieve the target of 500 schools by 2029. In 2026, the government accelerated the dissemination of this free boarding school program through a more inclusive and equitable approach, particularly targeting underprivileged communities (deciles 1-5). The following are the main components of the public communications management strategy for the People's School:

1. Communication Planning and Approach

The planning phase is the most crucial stage in the public communications management of the People's School. At this stage, the government conducts in-depth mapping to ensure that this revolutionary policy is not only communicated but also appropriately received by the target audience. This planning involves synchronization between ministries to formulate an integrative communications strategy, from determining the audience to developing messages that appeal to the emotional and rational aspects of the community.

The first strategy in this planning is highly specific target segmentation. The primary focus of outreach programs is directed at poor families and groups within the extreme poor, particularly children who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out in remote areas of Indonesia. This targeting is not without reason; the government recognizes that this group is the most in need of educational intervention, yet is often the most difficult to reach with formal government information due to geographic and economic constraints.

In an effort to reach this segment, the government has formulated messaging with clarity and conciseness to avoid ambiguity. Messages are no longer conveyed in complicated bureaucratic language, but instead emphasize the immediate benefits families will receive. Key points such as free education that is truly free of charge, boarding facilities that guarantee students' livelihoods, and the development of non-academic talents are the core topics highlighted to attract the interest of parents and children.

The government has cleverly shifted the educational paradigm from simply "school for a diploma" to "school for developing personal potential." By emphasizing the development of talents and practical skills, this message provides new hope for communities in remote areas that the People's School is a bridge to future prosperity. This solution-oriented narrative approach is expected to overcome public skepticism about the quality of free education programs, which are often underestimated.

The success of this message is supported by the implementation of a single, cross-sectoral narrative strategy. Through collaboration between the Ministry of Social Affairs (Kemensos), the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen), and the Ministry of State Secretariat (Kemensekneg), the government ensures that there is no conflicting information in the public sphere. All agencies operate with the same communication

guidelines, so the public will not be confused by differences in terminology or registration procedures in the field.

This consistent, single narrative serves as the government's primary shield against the risk of misinformation. When relevant ministries speak with one voice, public trust is strengthened. This single narrative also makes it easier for regional officials to translate central policies into local languages without changing the policy's essence, ensuring that interpretation of the People's School program remains intact from the central to the village level.

2. Socialization Method (Implementation)

The socialization of the People's School policy was implemented through a multi-channel approach that integrated traditional and digital methods. The first strategy focused on face-to-face communication and strategic partnerships with local governments and community leaders. The involvement of local actors such as village officials, religious leaders, and community activists was crucial for reaching target groups in areas with minimal internet access. The Socialization of the Role of Face-Based Communication in the... study demonstrated that face-to-face communication was highly effective in fostering in-depth understanding among local residents.

This partnership ensured that the central government's message did not stop at the bureaucratic level but was translated humanely by trusted figures within the community. Community leaders acted as agents of change, able to break down cultural barriers or overcome parental doubts about the People's School boarding program. Through interactive dialogues at village halls or community meetings, the community was given a space to ask questions directly and obtain instant clarification, which proved more effective in building trust than one-way communication.

Furthermore, the government optimized the use of social media and digital platforms to disseminate information massively and quickly. Agencies such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of State Secretariat use Instagram and YouTube as primary channels to upload video testimonials, streamline registration procedures, and share the latest program updates. This use of social media allows information to be accessed anytime and anywhere, and can be widely reshared by netizens to broaden the reach of policies.

Collaborations with educational influencers and digital communities are also being implemented to increase the legitimacy of the content delivered. The integration of social media into public programs like this opens up opportunities for cross-sector collaboration that were previously difficult to achieve conventionally. (PDF) The Utilization of Social Media As a Means of Public... explains that this collaborative approach amplifies the impact of messages through existing strategic networks in the digital community.

The third method is conducting roadshows and direct outreach that specifically target pockets of poverty. Joint teams from relevant ministries go directly to the field to hold small seminars or workshops on the long-term benefits of People's Schools for children's futures. These activities are designed to be dynamic and participatory, where residents not only listen to explanations but also engage in discussions about their children's potential talents that can be developed through the special curriculum at People's Schools.

This roadshow serves as a form of government physical presence among communities that have long felt marginalized from access to education. By directly visiting slums and remote villages, the government demonstrates a real commitment to eradicating poverty through education. These offline meetings also serve as a means for the government to more accurately verify prospective student data based on real-world conditions.

In addition to direct and digital communication channels, the government also utilizes outdoor media to reach the general public. Banners, large billboards, and brochures are being widely distributed in public service areas such as community health centers, markets, and bus

terminals. This physical media is designed with striking visuals and concise information points to ensure that the essence of the People's School policy remains accessible to highly mobile citizens.

3. Issue Management and Public Response (Monitoring)

The monitoring phase is a crucial tool for the government to maintain the positive narrative of the People's School policy. The government conducts intensive media monitoring, both on conventional media and social media, to map emerging opinion trends. Through sentiment analysis, the public communications team can identify whether the "Education for All" message has been well-received or has instead raised new doubts. This monitoring data serves as the basis for daily evaluations to determine the extent to which the policy is accurately understood by the public in various regions.

The issue analysis is not limited to data collection but also includes early identification of potential misinformation or hoaxes that could damage the program's image. Using digital analysis tools, the government can detect negative narratives or rumors regarding illegal levies and the quality of dormitories before they become viral. The speed in detecting these information anomalies allows the government to take preventative action through data-driven clarifications, thus alleviating unrest at the grassroots level early.

As a follow-up to the monitoring results, the relevant ministry's public relations team implemented a rapid response strategy through its communications rapid response unit. Every input, technical question regarding registration, and public complaint received through social media or the official complaint hotline is responded to immediately and with solutions. This swift and transparent response demonstrates that the government is not simply throwing policies at the public but is also fully responsible for all implementation dynamics experienced by citizens.

Finally, this response management mechanism serves as a bridge to build public trust. When the public feels their complaints and questions are heard and competently answered, the credibility of the People's School policy is strengthened. This responsive, two-way communication pattern ultimately transforms public communication management from simply disseminating information to an interactive, dialogical space. This is crucial to ensuring that any administrative obstacles or social qualms that arise in the field are promptly addressed for the program's long-term success.

4. Participation and Collaboration

The People's School's public communication management strategy is strengthened through strategic collaboration with higher education institutions. Partnerships with various universities are established through campus delegation visit programs aimed at providing operational support and academic legitimacy to the People's School curriculum. Students and lecturers are directly involved in providing learning assistance, sharing inspiration, and assisting with the character development program for boarding students. The involvement of universities serves as an effective communication tool to demonstrate to the public that although these schools are free for the poor, their quality standards and oversight are maintained under the supervision of education experts from renowned universities.

In addition to operational support, collaboration with universities also serves as a publicity channel to attract top graduates to become teachers at the People's Schools. Through collaboration with the PPG Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikdasmen), the government selects outstanding prospective teachers for placement in these schools. This synergy ensures that the People's Schools have competent human resources with high integrity. The presence of academics within the school environment creates a positive image that this program is an inclusive breakthrough that combines national academic standards with talent development and character building for students.

Public communication management is also realized through strong inter-agency collaboration to avoid overlapping roles. The Ministry of Social Affairs (Kemensos), as the primary administrator of this policy, works closely with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) in developing curriculum standards. Furthermore, the involvement of the Ministry of Public Works (PU) is crucial in the construction and maintenance of school building and dormitory infrastructure throughout Indonesia. This cross-sector collaboration reflects the integrated "One Government" policy, so that the message that reaches the public is a message about the country's seriousness in breaking the chain of intergenerational poverty through adequate facilities.

This synergy is further enhanced by the involvement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), which focuses on strengthening moral and religious education within the boarding school environment. This inter-agency collaboration is clear evidence that the People's School (Sekolah Rakyat) is not merely the responsibility of one sector, but rather a comprehensive national project. From a public communications perspective, this inter-ministerial harmony serves to build public trust that the infrastructure, curriculum, funding, and even student mental development are professionally managed by experts. Thus, this collaboration is a key factor in strengthening a credible, transparent policy narrative that has a real impact on target beneficiaries.

5. Multi-Platform Communication Channels

The People's School's communication management strategy relies on a multi-platform approach that integrates the power of digital media with the immediacy of face-to-face interaction. Through media and technology partnerships, the government is optimizing social media and official portals to disseminate strategic information, including the ambitious target of building 500 People's Schools by 2029. The use of these digital assets aims not only to disseminate technical data but also to build a strong visual narrative regarding the future transformation of education, allowing the wider public to monitor the progress of school development transparently and regularly.

On the other hand, the government recognizes that physical presence remains key to building trust in remote areas. Therefore, face-to-face communication is carried out through direct visits to marginalized communities and public seminars. This two-way interaction allows the government to directly hear parents' concerns while providing in-depth explanations of the benefits of the boarding school system. With this method, public communication is no longer a top-down instructional approach, but rather a participatory and humane dialogue.

One of the most innovative aspects of this strategy is the use of regional languages in outreach materials. The government translates key messages and program benefits into local languages to ensure that rural communities fully understand that this education is truly free and of high quality. This linguistic approach serves to break down psychological and bureaucratic barriers, so that residents perceive the People's School policy as a program closely aligned with their local identity and needs, rather than simply a foreign regulation from the central government.

The combination of rapid digital channels and personalized offline communication creates a comprehensive information ecosystem for all levels of society. While social media creates awareness at the national level, field visits and the use of regional languages ensure acceptance at the grassroots level. This multi-platform synergy ensures that the target of 500 schools can be effectively socialized, reaching those most in need, and minimizing the information gap between urban and rural communities.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the success of the socialization of the People's School policy in Indonesia is largely determined by the effectiveness of integrated public communication management at every stage. The government has successfully formulated a well-thought-out communication plan with a single narrative, "Education for All," that reaches both the emotional and rational aspects of its target audience in areas of extreme poverty. Through multi-platform channel orchestration, the government relies not only on digital media to reach urban communities but also cleverly utilizes face-to-face communication and local languages to overcome cultural barriers in remote areas. Cross-agency synergy and collaboration with universities have proven to be key pillars in building public trust, while a rapid response mechanism to community feedback ensures the policy remains credible and transparent in achieving the target of building 500 schools by 2029.

To optimize future communication strategies, the government is advised to continue strengthening the role of local communicators at the village level as direct advocates for families with limited access to digital information. It is crucial for relevant agencies to establish a more up-to-date information synchronization system between the central and regional governments to eliminate technical data gaps in the field. Furthermore, the socialization narrative needs to be developed more dynamically by highlighting real testimonials from beneficiaries as evidence of the program's success, in order to reduce public skepticism. Finally, regular evaluation of the effectiveness of communication channels is essential to ensure the socialization strategy remains relevant to evolving information consumption styles, and the vision of equitable, quality education can be fully realized without leaving any citizens behind.

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