

Implementation of Inclusive Education from the Perspective of School Management in Primary Schools

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools in Purworejo Regency from the perspective of school management. The research employed a quantitative approach using a questionnaire as the instrument. Validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive analysis, normality testing, and correlation testing were conducted to analyze the data. The findings indicate that all instruments were valid and reliable. Descriptively, the curriculum and student affairs aspects achieved relatively high performance, while the HR, facilities and infrastructure, community participation, and financing aspects remained low. Correlation analysis revealed that all seven management aspects were significantly associated with the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation ($p < 0.05$). The strongest relationships were found in community participation ($r = 0.939$) and HR ($r = 0.936$). The study also shows that most schools have gradually attempted to implement management functions, although challenges remain in teacher training, limited facilities and infrastructure, and support from policymakers. Nevertheless, principal initiatives, teacher collaboration, and parental involvement serve as key supporting factors in sustaining inclusive education implementation.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, School Management, Elementary School, Implementation

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi pendidikan inklusif di sekolah dasar di Kabupaten Purworejo dari perspektif manajemen sekolah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan kuesioner sebagai instrumen. Uji validitas, uji reliabilitas, analisis deskriptif, uji normalitas, dan uji korelasi dilakukan untuk menganalisis data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa semua instrumen valid dan reliabel. Secara deskriptif, aspek kurikulum dan kesiswaan mencapai kinerja yang relatif tinggi, sedangkan aspek SDM, sarana dan prasarana, peran serta masyarakat, dan pembiayaan masih rendah. Analisis korelasi mengungkapkan bahwa ketujuh aspek manajemen berhubungan signifikan dengan efektivitas implementasi pendidikan inklusif ($p < 0,05$). Hubungan terkuat ditemukan dalam partisipasi masyarakat ($r = 0,939$) dan SDM ($r = 0,936$). Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar sekolah secara bertahap telah berupaya menerapkan fungsi manajemen, meskipun masih terdapat tantangan dalam pelatihan guru, keterbatasan sarana dan prasarana, dan dukungan dari pembuat kebijakan. Meskipun demikian, inisiatif utama, kolaborasi guru, dan keterlibatan orang tua berfungsi sebagai faktor pendukung utama dalam mempertahankan implementasi pendidikan inklusif.

Kata Kunci : Pendidikan Inklusi, Manajemen sekolah, Sekolah Dasar, Implementasi



INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a global agenda to ensure that every child, including those with special needs, has equal rights and access to quality education. It emphasizes non-discrimination, social justice, and active participation of all learners in a common learning environment. In Indonesia, the policy framework for inclusive education was formally introduced through the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 70 of 2009, which mandated schools to accept and educate students with diverse abilities. Despite this regulatory framework, the implementation of inclusive education remains inconsistent, with many schools struggling to provide the necessary resources, teacher competence, and supportive environments. Addressing these issues is urgent, as inclusive education is not only a matter of equity but also a strategic step to improve the overall quality of education and achieve the national goal of universal education.

School management plays a pivotal role in the success of inclusive education. Effective management involves planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating policies and practices that create inclusive school cultures. Principals and school leaders are expected to establish institutional structures, allocate resources, provide professional development, and build partnerships with parents and communities to support inclusive practices. As Hoy and Miskel (2013) argue, inclusive leadership and participatory management are essential to coordinate stakeholders and ensure that all students, regardless of ability, receive the support they need. Without effective management, inclusive education risks remaining symbolic rather than substantive.

Previous studies highlight the importance of curriculum adaptation, teacher training, and community involvement in inclusive education. Ainscow et al. (2006) found that school leadership commitment strongly influences the success of inclusive programs. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) emphasized differentiated pedagogy as a cornerstone of inclusive classroom practice. Shaeffer (2019) further argued that inclusive education requires strong community participation to achieve equity and social justice. In the Indonesian context, research by Putri and Mubarak (2019) and Yuwono & Mirnawati (2021) revealed that while some progress has been made, many schools still face challenges in human resources, infrastructure, and financing. These findings suggest that inclusive education in Indonesia is still at an early stage of development and requires stronger managerial and systemic support.

Although prior studies have addressed inclusive education from the perspectives of curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, fewer have examined its implementation comprehensively through the lens of **school management** in Indonesian elementary schools. There is limited empirical evidence on how multiple managerial aspects—such as institutional readiness, curriculum, student affairs, human resources, facilities, community participation, and financing—collectively influence the effectiveness of inclusive practices. This gap underscores the need for a holistic investigation of school management in inclusive education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. School Management in the Context of Inclusive Education

School management is a crucial factor in supporting the success of inclusive education implementation. According to Apriliani et al. (2024), inclusive management encompasses planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs that are responsive to the needs of students with special needs (SWSN). The institutional readiness of schools, including the existence of formal policies, inclusion teams, and principal leadership, is highly influential in ensuring the sustainability of inclusive practices.

The study of Riowati, Hendriani, & Paramita (2022) through a systematic literature review emphasized that school-based management functions as a quality assurance system that is vital for the implementation of inclusive education. This implies that every

aspect of school management—including institutional structure, curriculum, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, community participation, and financing—must be managed in an integrated manner to guarantee equitable and high-quality educational services for all students.

2. Curriculum and Student Affairs

Curriculum adaptation is one of the key indicators of success in inclusive education. Zakiah, Karsidi, & Yusuf (2023) found that the implementation of inclusive education policies in elementary schools still encounters obstacles, particularly in curriculum adaptation and teaching methods suitable for SWSN. Nevertheless, some schools have successfully implemented flexible lesson plans, differentiated instruction, and adaptive assessment (Ramadhan & Maryani, 2024).

In terms of student affairs, Abubakar, Yuliani, & Ashar (2024) highlighted the importance of open admission policies, systematic data collection, as well as counseling and guidance services. The success of student affairs is also supported by the involvement of students in school activities without discrimination.

3. Human Resources (HR) and Teacher Competence

Teacher competence remains one of the greatest challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. Zarnazi et al. (2024) demonstrated that many teachers in inclusive schools still face limitations in inclusive pedagogy, differentiated learning, and classroom management. This finding is consistent with Achmad & Alawee (2023), who stressed that strengthening teacher capacity through continuous training is essential to ensure that inclusive education is not merely a symbolic policy but is truly implemented in daily teaching practices.

4. Facilities and Infrastructure

Accessible facilities and infrastructure are absolute requirements for the implementation of inclusive education. The study of Prathama, Kusumaningrum, & Dewi (2022) revealed that many schools still lack disability-friendly facilities, such as ramps, special toilets, and learning aids. These infrastructural inequalities create participation gaps for SWSN in the learning process. Therefore, inclusive infrastructure standards must be mandated in all elementary schools (Widiya Sari et al., 2024).

5. Community Participation

The involvement of parents and the community is a key driver of success in inclusive education. Ramadhan & Maryani (2024) demonstrated that schools capable of building partnerships with communities are able to overcome resource limitations through both material and non-material support. This is reinforced by Abubakar et al. (2024), who found that community participation provides emotional as well as social support for SWSN, thereby strengthening inclusive practices as a shared culture.

6. Financing Inclusive Education

Limited financing remains a critical issue in the management of inclusive schools. Most schools rely solely on BOS (School Operational Assistance) funds, which are often insufficient to cover the special needs of SWSN. Apriliani et al. (2024) emphasized the necessity of special funding schemes from local governments and community contributions to ensure the sustainability of inclusive programs. Without adequate budget support, the implementation of inclusive education is at risk of being suboptimal.

Each aspect is elaborated into various indicators, which are then developed into items with specific criteria to establish levels of performance as an inclusive school. Schools can conduct self-evaluations and manage the results to determine their current position as an inclusive school—whether it is very good, sufficient, moderate, poor, or very poor. Based on this explanation, the problems can be formulated as follows:

1. What is the role of school management in the implementation of inclusive education in schools?

2. To what extent are stakeholders (teachers, parents, and the community) involved in supporting school management in implementing inclusive education?
3. How effective are the policies and practices of school management in creating an inclusive learning environment?

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used is quantitative research with a case study approach. This study employs a quantitative case study approach to explore the implementation of inclusive education within the context of school management at the elementary school level. The research includes 11 inclusive elementary schools.

The case study approach was chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights into specific phenomena within natural contexts (Yin, 2018). Through data collection involving in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, this study aims to understand how school management organizes and supports the implementation of inclusive education, as well as to identify the challenges encountered and strategies applied (Creswell, 2013). This approach enables a holistic analysis of managerial aspects and the principal's role in a complex and dynamic context (Stake, 1995).

Data were collected using in-depth interviews and questionnaires involving principals, teachers, and staff. Direct observations were conducted in classrooms and the school environment. Document analysis was also carried out, focusing on policies and inclusive education programs. The data analysis technique used is quantitative analysis, employing statistical software to analyze questionnaire data and produce measurable results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability Testing

The validity test results showed that all items under the seven aspects—Institutional, Curriculum, Student Affairs, Human Resources (HR), Facilities and Infrastructure, Community Participation, and Financing—had correlation coefficients above the r-table value (0.6021), indicating that all instruments were valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha also confirmed that all variables were reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$). The highest reliability was found in the Curriculum aspect ($\alpha = 0.959$), while the lowest was in Financing ($\alpha = 0.845$).

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive results reveal variations across the seven aspects:

1. **Institutional Aspect**
The achievement levels ranged between 50% and 73.5%, with no school reaching the "high" category. This indicates that formal policies, the formation of inclusion teams, and the role of principals in institutional management are still limited.
2. **Curriculum Aspect**
The curriculum was among the strongest aspects. Five schools achieved over 85%, with the highest at 92.7%. These schools demonstrated flexible lesson plans (RPP), differentiated instruction, and adapted assessment methods. However, some schools remained in the "moderate" category, highlighting uneven implementation.
3. **Student Affairs Aspect**
This was the most successful aspect. Several schools reached 100% achievement, meaning that admission policies, systematic student data collection, counseling services, and student participation in activities were well-established. However, a few schools remained weak (61–65%), suggesting inconsistency across institutions.
4. **Human Resources (HR) Aspect**

This aspect had the lowest performance. Only one school achieved above 85%, while most schools fell below 50%. The findings suggest limited teacher training, insufficient pedagogical competence, and lack of experience in adapting lessons for students with special needs.

5. **Facilities and Infrastructure Aspect**

Significant disparities were observed. One school scored very high (95%), while many others scored below 30%. Common issues included the absence of ramps, accessible toilets, and learning aids for children with disabilities.

6. **Community Participation Aspect**

Community involvement was inconsistent. One school achieved 85.7%, demonstrating strong parental and community engagement, but most schools ranged between 28% and 64%. This indicates that inclusive education is not yet fully supported as a collective cultural practice.

7. **Financing Aspect**

Financing was the weakest area. Only one school reached 64%, while most were below 30%. In some cases, schools achieved as little as 7–14%. This reveals a lack of sustainable funding from BOS (School Operational Assistance), local government budgets, or community contributions.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed significant positive associations between all management aspects and the effectiveness of inclusive education ($p < 0.05$). The strongest correlations were:

- Community Participation ($r = 0.939$)
- HumanResources ($r = 0.936$)

These results highlight the crucial role of external support and teacher readiness in ensuring successful inclusive education. The lowest correlation was Financing ($r = 0.646$), though still statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that inclusive education implementation in Purworejo elementary schools is **uneven and fragmented across aspects of management**.

1. **Institutional and Leadership Readiness**

The moderate performance in institutional aspects shows that many schools have yet to formalize inclusive policies and structures. This aligns with Hoy and Miskel (2013), who emphasized that effective school management requires inclusive and participatory leadership. Without strong leadership, inclusive programs often lack sustainability.

2. **Curriculum and Student Affairs: Relatively Strong**

The relatively high scores in curriculum and student affairs suggest that schools are increasingly adapting teaching and learning practices to diverse student needs. This finding supports Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), who argued that differentiation in teaching is essential for inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, strong performance in student affairs reflects progress in equitable admission policies and counseling services, as also noted by Putri & Mubarak (2019) in Yogyakarta.

3. **Human Resources: The Critical Weakness**

Despite policy support, teacher competence remains inadequate. Many teachers lack training in inclusive pedagogy and classroom management for students with special needs. This resonates with Ainscow et al. (2006), who found that teacher training and professional development are decisive for inclusive practice. The strong correlation between HR and effectiveness ($r = 0.936$) further confirms that improving teacher competence is the most urgent priority.

4. Facilities and Infrastructure Gaps

The sharp contrast between schools with adequate facilities and those without shows systemic inequality. Accessibility features such as ramps and specialized toilets are essential for physical inclusion (UNESCO, 2020). Without these, schools risk excluding students with disabilities from full participation.

5. Community Participation as a Driving Force

Community engagement emerged as the strongest determinant of inclusive success ($r = 0.939$). Schools with active parental involvement and community partnerships were able to compensate for limited resources. This finding is consistent with Shaeffer (2019), who highlighted the role of community support in achieving equity and social justice in education.

6. Financing Constraints

The limited financing confirms that inclusive education in Indonesia still struggles with sustainability. Unlike developed countries where funding is specifically allocated, most Indonesian schools rely on BOS funds, which are often insufficient. Without adequate resources, inclusive initiatives risk being symbolic rather than substantive.

Implications

- Strengthening teacher training is the most urgent step, given its direct impact on inclusive classroom practices.
- Schools need stronger partnerships with local governments and communities to fill resource gaps.
- Policy frameworks should mandate equitable budget allocations for inclusive education, including infrastructure development.

The results of this study highlight uneven progress in the implementation of inclusive education across different aspects of school management. While curriculum and student affairs demonstrate encouraging development, challenges persist in human resources, facilities, community engagement, and financing.

Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the literature on inclusive education by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian elementary school context, an area that remains underexplored compared to developed countries. It confirms the theoretical propositions of Ainscow et al. (2006) and Florian & Black-Hawkins (2011) that teacher competence and differentiated pedagogy are central to successful inclusion. Moreover, it expands existing frameworks of school management by demonstrating that community participation is not only supportive but a critical determinant ($r = 0.939$) of inclusive education effectiveness. This finding advances the discourse on inclusive school reform by emphasizing the socio-cultural dimensions of management, beyond structural and policy aspects.

Practical Implications**1. For Schools**

- Strengthen leadership and institutional commitment by establishing formal inclusive education policies and school inclusion teams.
- Invest in continuous professional development for teachers to improve their competence in inclusive pedagogy, classroom management, and differentiated instruction.
- Build partnerships with parents and local communities to increase support, both material and non-material, for inclusive programs.

2. For Local Governments and Policymakers

- Provide targeted funding schemes to ensure sustainable financing for inclusive education, beyond general BOS allocations.

- Develop inclusive education training centers at the district level to standardize teacher capacity-building programs.
- Mandate accessibility standards in all elementary schools to address infrastructure disparities.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged.

1. First, the sample was limited to 11 inclusive elementary schools in Purworejo Regency, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions in Indonesia.
2. Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported data through questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias.
3. Third, the quantitative case study design provided breadth but limited depth in understanding the lived experiences of teachers, parents, and students in inclusive schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies may consider:

1. Expanding the scope to include a larger number of schools across multiple regions to enhance generalizability.
2. Employing mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights on inclusive practices over time.
3. Exploring student and parent perspectives more deeply, as their voices remain underrepresented in inclusive education research in Indonesia.
4. Examining policy implementation at the district and provincial levels to identify systemic barriers and enablers of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that school management plays a decisive role in the success of inclusive education in elementary schools. While curriculum and student affairs are relatively strong, human resources, infrastructure, community participation, and financing remain critical challenges. The findings underscore that community engagement and teacher competence are the strongest determinants of effective inclusive practices. Strengthening school management capacity through professional development, policy reform, and equitable financing is therefore essential for sustainable implementation.

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