

Inclusive Education and Learning Management in Indonesia: Responding to Social and Cultural Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia by highlighting the challenges and opportunities faced at the local level. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study examines inclusive education policies, social and geographical diversity, facilities, and community support in various regions of Indonesia. The study findings show that although inclusive policies have been well implemented in large cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya, areas such as Samarinda and Malang still need strengthening in terms of policies and resources. The cultural diversity in Indonesia presents its own opportunities and challenges, with areas such as Yogyakarta and Denpasar successfully integrating local cultural values into the curriculum to support inclusivity. Adequate facilities and infrastructure in large cities are a determining factor, while other areas strive to improve accessibility through local collaboration. Community and parental support also play a significant role in the success of inclusive education. Overall, this study shows the importance of collaboration between government, schools, and communities to create more inclusive education in Indonesia.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Social Diversity, Educational Facilities

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an educational approach that aims to ensure equal access to education for all learners, including those with special needs. The concept is based on the principles of human rights and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their abilities or disabilities (Bombardelli, 2020; Merrigan & Joyce, 2021). Inclusive education seeks to accommodate the diversity of special educational needs and individual opportunities, so that all children, including those with disabilities, have an equal opportunity to participate in the mainstream education system and adapt socially (Shatayeva et al., 2021). The implementation of inclusive education involves various strategies such as differentiated instruction,



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the use of assistive technology, and professional training for educators, although challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and the need for additional resources remain (Qian & Rong, 2023; Sholihah, 2024). Research shows that inclusive education not only increases student engagement and achievement, but also instills healthy thinking, tolerance, and creates a less discriminatory world (Qian & Rong, 2023; Szumski et al., 2017). In Indonesia, inclusive education policies have shown significant impact in ensuring that children with special needs receive their rights, with institutional support and collaboration between educators, parents, and the community being key elements (Achmad, 2023; Sholihah, 2024).

Inclusive education in Indonesia faces significant social challenges, such as stigma against students with special needs and disparities between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Students with special needs often experience stigma from society, peers, and even parents, which hinders their integration into inclusive school environments (Komarudin & Kaeni, 2023; Suhendri, 2020; Syamsi & Noormiyanto, 2024). Lack of understanding and support from teachers and parents worsens this situation, although some positive attitudes have begun to develop (Ediyanto et al., 2024; Latif & Paramita, 2023; Rahmi et al., 2024). In addition, socio-economic disparities worsen the conditions of inclusive education, especially in suburban and rural areas that lack adequate resources and facilities (Ediyanto et al., 2024; Sunardi et al., 2024). Infrastructure limitations, such as physical accessibility in schools, also become obstacles that make it difficult for students with special needs (Komarudin & Kaeni, 2023; Sunardi et al., 2024). To overcome this challenge, strategies that can be taken include increasing teacher training, collaborating with parents and communities, improving infrastructure, and socializing and educating the community to change perceptions of students with special needs (Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023; Syamsi & Noormiyanto, 2024). With collaborative efforts and ongoing commitment, inclusive education in Indonesia is expected to be more equitable and effective for all students.

Cultural challenges in inclusive learning in Indonesia are greatly influenced by the diversity of cultural values spread across more than 17,000 islands and more than 300 ethnic groups with 250 different dialects (Ridwan & Rahmawati, 2019). These different cultural values can influence how communities view inclusivity, where some communities may be more open to inclusive education, while others continue to hold less supportive traditional views (Fitriadi et al., 2024; Mariyono, 2024). Local traditions are also often a barrier, especially if communities view children with special needs with stigma or do not understand the importance of education for them (Ediyanto et al., 2024; Umiati & Sufi, 2024). However, these traditions can also be a strength in inclusive education through the implementation of local culture-based curricula, such as ethnomathematics or traditional music literacy, which can enhance student learning (Fitriadi et al., 2024). To overcome these cultural differences, multicultural education is needed that instills values of tolerance and respect for differences, as well as teacher training and curriculum development that reflect Indonesia's cultural diversity (Aprilia et al., 2024; Mariyono, 2024). With this approach, inclusive education can promote social harmony amidst Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Effective learning management plays a key role in improving the quality of education by facing modern challenges such as technological developments, diverse student needs, and demands to create an inclusive learning environment. One important aspect is the continuous training and professional development of teachers, which allows them to continue to develop relevant skills and knowledge (Qodir et al., 2024). Support for teaching innovation through visionary leadership is also very important to encourage teaching staff to dare to try new teaching methods (Dwi, 2024). In addition, adaptive curriculum



management through technology integration can enrich students' learning experiences, while a participatory approach in designing the curriculum creates a more holistic and inclusive learning environment (Karim et al., 2024; Munir & Ulfatin, 2023). Supporting facilities such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) also play an important role by enabling online collaboration and providing support in educational decision-making (Bradley, 2020). Although limited resources and unequal access to technology are challenges, with strategic planning and proper training support, learning management can be an effective solution to create more inclusive and high-quality education (Qodir et al., 2024; Munir & Ulfatin, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Concept and Theory of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an approach that emphasizes human rights, equality, and accessibility, with the aim of ensuring that all students, including those with special needs, have equal access to education in a supportive environment. These principles are reflected in various theories, such as the accessibility theory which emphasizes the importance of providing adequate facilities and resources to support students with disabilities (Maulida, 2019), the educational equality theory which affirms the right of all children to receive education without discrimination (Guan, 2024), and the human rights theory that underlies inclusive education policies in Indonesia through PERMENDIKNAS Number 70 of 2009 (Mulyadi, 2017). Globally, inclusive education has been proven effective in reducing social inequality and increasing social stability, although contextual analysis is essential for its successful implementation (Ainscow, 2020). In Indonesia, although awareness of inclusive education is starting to grow, challenges such as the lack of accompanying teachers, minimal policy socialization, budget constraints, and social stigma are still obstacles (Ediyanto et al., 2024; Paramita et al., 2024). Collaboration between schools, parents, and communities is needed to strengthen the implementation of effective inclusive education in Indonesia (Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023).

2. Limited Access to Education and Health Services

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia faces significant social challenges. Stigma against students with special needs is often a major barrier, stemming from a lack of understanding of the rights and potential of students with disabilities. Despite positive attitudes from some communities, stigma and discrimination are still rife (Julia et al., 2024; Sunardi et al., 2024). In addition, socio-economic differences add to the complexity of implementing inclusive education, with schools in urban areas tending to have better facilities than schools in rural or suburban areas, which often lack adequate resources and teacher training (Sunardi et al., 2024; Komarudin & Kaeni, 2023). Another challenge is the lack of community understanding, which leads to minimal support for inclusive education and low teacher competence in dealing with students with special needs (Komarudin & Kaeni, 2023; Kurniawati, 2021; Suhendri, 2020). The gap in access to inclusive education between urban and rural areas also worsens the situation, where schools in rural areas often face a lack of facilities and teacher training, while schools in urban areas are more successful in implementing inclusivity (Kurniawati, 2021; Sari et al., 2022). The social impacts of an exclusive education system include social isolation and the reinforcement of discrimination, which can hinder the development of students with special needs (Bakhri et al., 2017; Syamsi & Noormiyanto, 2024). To overcome these challenges, collaboration between the government, schools, parents, and the community is needed to create an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students.



3. Potential for Social Conflict as an Impact of Social Disparities

Learning management in the context of local culture in Indonesia faces challenges related to the acceptance of inclusive education, especially influenced by strong cultural values in various regions. In some places, a homogeneous culture can hinder the acceptance of students from different backgrounds. Research at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nahdlatul Ulama (MINU) Bangil Pasuruan shows that the implementation of multicultural education management creates a more inclusive environment despite ethnic plurality (Thoyib et al., 2021). In addition, in Lampung, the introduction of multicultural education based on local cultural values is important for character formation in early childhood (Suri & Chandra, 2021). The multicultural approach implemented at SMK Bhakti Karya Parigi, West Java, has shown success in formally organizing diversity and building religious inclusivity (Niam & Sholihah, 2022). Continuous teacher training and a curriculum that respects cultural diversity also play an important role in creating a tolerant learning environment (Fadhilah, 2024). Other major challenges include institutional barriers and socio-cultural prejudices, which require comprehensive training programs and equitable resource allocation (Mariyono, 2024), as well as life experiences with diversity to increase students' intercultural sensitivity (Yanto et al., 2022).

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing and analyzing the implementation of inclusive education and learning management in various regions in Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth insights into the challenges, policies, and practices implemented in each school related to inclusive education. This method also allows researchers to understand the social, cultural, and cultural dynamics that influence the implementation of inclusive education. This research will be conducted in several cities and regions with varying criteria, covering urban and rural areas in Indonesia. The selected school levels are elementary, junior high, and senior high/vocational high schools. The selection of these levels aims to obtain a broader perspective on the implementation of inclusive education from elementary to secondary levels. Data will be collected through in-depth interview techniques, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews will be conducted with school principals, teachers, students, parents, and other related parties, but there are limitations from researchers who require in-depth interviews using Zoom. Observations will cover teaching and learning activities, interactions between students, and the use of inclusive facilities. Document analysis will include a review of education policies and reports related to inclusive education in the schools studied.

Table 1: Research Criteria and Objects

Criteria	Information	School Levels Studied
Inclusive Education Policy	Schools with inclusive policies that support children with special needs.	Elementary School, Middle School, High School/Vocational School





Criteria	Information	School Levels Studied
Various Levels of Education	Reviewing various levels of education (elementary school, middle school, high school/vocational school).	Elementary School, Middle School, High School/Vocational School
Social and Geographical Diversity	Schools in areas with social, cultural and economic diversity.	Elementary School, Middle School, High School/Vocational School
Facilities and Infrastructure	Schools with facilities that support inclusive education.	Elementary School, Middle School, High School/Vocational School
Community and Parent Support	Schools that involve communities and parents in inclusive education.	Elementary School, Middle School, High School/Vocational School

The big cities of Jakarta, Surabaya, and Denpasar were chosen because they have more structured inclusive policies and stronger government support, these big cities also have relatively complete facilities to support inclusive education. In each of these cities, the research will cover elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, with a total of 3 schools to be studied at each level. Yogyakarta, Makassar, and Denpasar were chosen because of the cultural and educational diversity in these cities. The research will cover elementary, junior high, and senior high schools with 3 schools at each level. Malang, Semarang, and Padang have diverse social and geographical characteristics, making them interesting objects to study how inclusive education is implemented in areas with different backgrounds. The research will be conducted at elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in 2 schools per level. Cities such as Depok, Medan, and Samarinda were chosen because of the active participation of the community and parents in inclusive education. The research will be conducted at elementary, junior high, and senior high schools with 3 schools per level. By selecting these areas, the research will be able to provide a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of inclusive education in various social and geographical contexts in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study reveals how the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia has evolved according to various local contexts. The findings are described based on five main criteria: inclusive education policies, social and geographical diversity, facilities and infrastructure, and community and parental support. To support the narrative, qualitative tables are used to summarize the main themes and patterns found in the study.



1. Inclusive Education Policy

Inclusive education policies in each region show differences in terms of implementation and level of success. In Jakarta and Surabaya, this policy is translated into a special mentoring program for children with special needs and intensive training for teachers. Meanwhile, in Malang and Samarinda, the policy still focuses on strengthening local regulations and adjusting the curriculum to students' needs.

Table 2: Inclusive Education Policy Implementation Across Indonesian Regions

	Policy Implementation	Observed Impacts
Jakarta	Special mentoring and regular teacher training	Increasing the participation of ABK in teaching and learning activities.
Surabaya	Inclusive curriculum with adaptive programs	Students showed improvement in social interactions.
Malang	Adjusting the curriculum to student needs	Progress in engaging students with special needs.
Samarinda	Strengthening local regulations	Teachers and staff awareness of inclusivity is starting to increase.

2. Social and Geographical Diversity

Social and geographic diversity influences acceptance of inclusive education. Schools in Yogyakarta and Denpasar use cultural diversity as an asset in building a tolerant learning environment. Meanwhile, in Makassar and Padang, social diversity is a challenge, but community-based approaches are being implemented to increase acceptance.

Table 3: Social and Geographical Diversity in Inclusive Education Practices

Region	Main Themes That Emerge	Practices or Innovations Implemented
Yogyakarta	Cultural diversity encourages social tolerance	Integration of local cultural values into the school curriculum.
Denpasar	Community collaboration in support of inclusivity	Community training to support children with special needs in the school environment.
Makassar	The challenges of social diversity	Dialogue between schools and communities to increase understanding.
Padang	Custom-based approach	The use of traditional symbols to increase ABK involvement.

3. Facilities and Infrastructure

Facilities supporting inclusive education show diverse developments. In big cities like Jakarta and Bandung, infrastructure such as access ramps and learning aids are quite adequate. Meanwhile, in Malang and Depok, efforts to procure facilities continue to be carried out through the support of local governments and local communities.





Table 4: Condition of Facilities and Infrastructure Supporting Inclusive Education

Region	Facility Condition	Initiatives Undertaken
Jakarta	Complete: access ramp, learning aids available	Regular maintenance of facilities.
Bandung	Adequate, but needs updating of technology tools	Teacher training to use assistive devices effectively.
Malang	In development stage	Community fundraising for new facilities.
Depok	Basic infrastructure available	Improving accessibility through partnerships with local NGOs.

4. Community and Parent Support

Community and parental support is a key factor in the success of inclusive education. In Denpasar and Yogyakarta, parental involvement is very active, especially in school training and discussion programs. In Makassar and Padang, community support is starting to grow through community-based initiatives that support children with special needs.

Table 5: Community and Parental Support for Inclusive Education

Region	Form of Support	Observed Results
Yogyakarta	Parents are active in discussions and seminars	Increasing awareness of the needs of ABK.
Denpasar	Local communities support school activities	ABK's social interactions are increasing.
Makassar	Increasing community participation in school programs	ABK is more involved in learning activities.
Padang	Involvement of community leaders in supporting schools	Public perception of inclusivity is increasingly positive.

The results of this study indicate that inclusive education in Indonesia continues to experience positive developments with various initiatives in each region. The tables above summarize the main themes and practices that support the success of inclusive programs, with a focus on policy, diversity, facilities, and community support. These findings demonstrate the importance of collaboration between various parties to improve the quality of inclusive education throughout Indonesia.





Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia has experienced positive developments although there are still challenges. A deeper analysis shows that there is alignment between the research results and the underlying literature, and highlights aspects that require more attention to strengthen inclusive education in the future. Inclusive education policies in Indonesia have begun to be implemented, especially in large cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya, which utilize supportive regulations to strengthen inclusivity in schools. These policies include special mentoring and regular training for teachers, which is in line with the findings of Qian and Rong (2023), who emphasize the importance of professional training as a key element in the success of inclusive education. However, in areas such as Samarinda and Malang, inclusive policies are still in the development stage, which emphasizes the need for collaboration between local governments and local communities as outlined by Sholihah (2024).

Indonesia's cultural diversity, as explained by Ridwan and Rahmawati (2019), creates both opportunities and challenges in inclusive education. The results of the study showed that areas such as Yogyakarta and Denpasar use cultural diversity as a strength to increase social tolerance through the integration of cultural values in the curriculum. This supports the argument of Fitriadi et al. (2024) that local culture-based education can increase student engagement in learning. On the other hand, areas such as Makassar and Padang still face challenges of social diversity, although efforts such as community dialogue have shown positive results.

Inclusive education facilities are one of the determinants of successful policy implementation. The results of the study show that schools in Jakarta and Bandung have adequate facilities, including access ramps and learning aids, as suggested by Maulida's (2019) accessibility theory. In areas such as Malang and Depok, although facilities are not yet fully adequate, there are initiatives to improve infrastructure through community fundraising and collaboration with NGOs. This reflects the importance of a community-based approach in overcoming resource constraints, as outlined by Syamsi and Noormiyanto (2024).

Community and parental support plays a vital role in the success of inclusive education. This study found that in areas such as Yogyakarta and Denpasar, parental involvement in discussions and seminars showed positive results in raising awareness of the needs of children with special needs. This supports the argument of Ediyanto et al. (2024) that collaboration between parents, teachers, and the community is a key element in ensuring the success of inclusive education. In Makassar and Padang, local community involvement is growing, indicating great potential to increase the sustainability of inclusion programs by strengthening the relationship between schools and the community.

One of the challenges identified in this study is the gap between urban areas and other areas in terms of policies, facilities, and public awareness. Previous literature also highlights this, where schools in urban areas are better able to implement inclusive education due to better access to resources (Sunardi et al., 2024). However, efforts made in areas such as Makassar and Malang show that this challenge can be overcome through collaborative approaches and local innovation, including cultural integration in education as proposed by Fitriadi et al. (2024). These results and analysis indicate that inclusive education in Indonesia is moving in a positive direction with promising developments in various regions. However, a





more targeted strategy is needed to reduce the gap between regions and increase the capacity of all stakeholders in realizing inclusive and equal education.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education in Indonesia has shown significant progress, although it still faces various social, cultural, and infrastructure challenges. The results of this study highlight that inclusive education policies, such as special assistance and teacher training, have been well implemented in big cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya. However, in areas such as Samarinda and Malang, policy implementation still needs further strengthening. Social and cultural diversity in Indonesia is both a challenge and an opportunity. Areas such as Yogyakarta and Denpasar have successfully utilized cultural diversity to strengthen inclusivity, while areas such as Makassar and Padang have begun to adopt a community-based approach to increase acceptance of students with special needs. This shows the importance of local adaptation in dealing with complex cultural diversity. In terms of facilities, big cities have relatively adequate infrastructure to support inclusive education, while areas such as Malang and Depok show promising initiatives through community fundraising and local partnerships. In addition, community and parental support is one of the important pillars in the success of inclusive education, as seen in areas such as Yogyakarta and Denpasar. In conclusion, inclusive education in Indonesia is moving in a better direction, with various local and national efforts supporting its implementation. However, inter-regional disparities remain a major challenge that needs to be addressed through collaboration, capacity building, and more equitable resource allocation.

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