

Implementation of Inclusive Education at Aisyiyah Kindergarten Branch V Martapura

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Article history

Submitted: 2025/07/14; Revised: 2025/08/20; Accepted: 2025/09/17

Abstract

Early childhood education is recognized globally as the most critical period for optimizing holistic child development cognitive, social-emotional, language, and moral. This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of inclusive education at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura, focusing on planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning for children with special needs (CWD). The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of four stages data reduction, data coding, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that inclusive education planning has been carried out over the past two years but remains limited to administrative aspects, lacking adequate support in the form of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Implementation is conducted through collaborative and individual approaches, however, limited facilities and human resources present significant challenges. Evaluation is carried out informally through teacher observations and communication with parents, without standardized formal instruments. The analysis indicates that the success of inclusive education is strongly influenced by teacher commitment, flexibility in teaching approaches, and parental involvement. However, program sustainability requires stronger policy support, specialized training, and collaboration with external experts.

Keywords

implementation; inclusive education; learning evaluation; planning.



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is recognized globally as the most critical period for optimizing holistic child development cognitive, social-emotional, language, and moral (Putri, 2022). During these formative years, the stimulation that children receive from their environment and educational settings lays the foundation for lifelong learning, adaptation,

and participation in society (Turnbull et al., 2019). In Indonesia, the regulation outlined in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 mandates that early childhood development must be fostered across multiple domains through educational services tailored to children's developmental needs and characteristics (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010). One of the pivotal efforts to achieve educational equity is the implementation of inclusive education, which is defined as the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increased participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion from education (UNESCO, 2019). Inclusive education not only ensures equitable access but also emphasizes the importance of belonging, participation, and achievement for every child, regardless of their abilities or background (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018).

The concept of inclusion has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Initially, educational systems focused on integration, where children with special needs were placed in mainstream classrooms but often received separate instruction or support. Today, the focus has shifted toward full inclusion, which requires systemic changes in curriculum, teaching methods, classroom management, and assessment to ensure that every child can meaningfully participate in and contribute to classroom life (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; Loreman, 2017). This is especially crucial in early childhood education, where the classroom environment and daily routines play a significant role in socialization and the development of self-concept (Mitchell, 2015).

Inclusive education is not limited to children with diagnosed disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, ADHD, or speech delays. It also recognizes and celebrates the wide range of learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual differences present in every classroom (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; DuPaul & Stoner, 2014). For this reason, inclusive pedagogies require teachers to be adaptive, creative, and responsive in their approaches (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018; Salend, 2016). Despite a strong policy foundation for inclusive education in Indonesia and many other countries, the practical realization of these ideals remains a major challenge. Research consistently points to several barriers, including a lack of teacher training in special and inclusive education, insufficient resources, limited parental awareness, and, in some cases, societal stigma or misunderstanding regarding children with special needs (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; Al Sabatin, 2020). According to UNESCO (2019), successful inclusion requires not only policy commitment but also strategic investment in teacher education, school infrastructure, and community engagement.

The situation in Indonesia reflects these global challenges. While the government has issued regulations such as Permendiknas No. 70/2009 specifically addressing inclusive education, implementation in the field is inconsistent (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010). Many early childhood education centers, especially in smaller towns and rural areas,

still struggle to provide adequate support for children with special needs due to a shortage of trained teachers and limited access to supporting professionals such as psychologists, therapists, and guidance counselors (Putri, 2022; Irani & Setiyatna, 2024). TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura is a notable example of an early childhood education institution that has embraced inclusive practices despite these challenges. The school openly welcomes children with a variety of needs including those with autism, speech delays, cerebral palsy, and ADHD into its mainstream classrooms. The philosophy of the school is grounded in the belief that every child has the right to learn and develop in a supportive community, and that diversity enriches the educational experience for all (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Turnbull et al., 2019). Although the school does not yet have dedicated special education teachers, the regular teachers have participated in workshops and training sessions to improve their understanding of inclusive strategies (Al Sabatin, 2020; DuPaul & Stoner, 2014).

In the context of inclusive early childhood education, the role of the teacher becomes even more complex and demanding. Teachers must plan and deliver lessons that are flexible and differentiated, accommodate individual learning needs, and foster a respectful and collaborative classroom culture (Smith et al., 2020; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017). This includes implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for children who require additional support, as well as ensuring that classroom routines, materials, and activities are accessible to all (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018). However, research on inclusive education at the early childhood level, especially in the Martapura region, remains limited. This is a critical gap, as the kindergarten stage is essential for laying the groundwork for children's future academic and social success (Irani & Setiyatna, 2024). An in-depth examination of how inclusive education is planned, implemented, and evaluated at this level can provide valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers (Mitchell, 2015; UNESCO, 2019).

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the implementation of inclusive education at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura, with a focus on three key aspects: planning, instructional delivery, and evaluation. The findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing improvement of inclusive practice in early childhood education and inform the development of policies and strategies that promote high-quality, equitable educational experiences for all children (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Loreman, 2017).

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of inclusive education at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura (Irani & Setiyatna, 2024; Salend, 2016). Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for investigating complex social phenomena, capturing the meanings and perspectives of participants, and providing rich, contextualized descriptions of educational practices (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018; Mitchell, 2015). The study was conducted over a period of

approximately three months at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura, located in Banjar Regency, South Kalimantan. The choice of site was intentional, given the school's pioneering role in inclusive education at the early childhood level in the region (Putri, 2022).

Participant selection was carried out using purposive sampling, which allows for the deliberate selection of informants who possess relevant knowledge and direct involvement in the phenomenon under study (Salend, 2016). The informants included the school principal, classroom teachers, parents of children with special needs, and professional staff such as psychologists. By including multiple perspectives, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive picture of inclusive education as it is enacted in practice (Smith et al., 2020; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017). Data collection employed three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to closely examine the day-to-day implementation of inclusive practices, teacher-child interactions, classroom management strategies, and the use of individualized supports such as IEPs (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all key informants. Interview guides included questions about the planning of inclusive programs, instructional approaches, challenges encountered, and solutions applied. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to probe for deeper insights and clarify responses as needed (Smith et al., 2020). Documentation involved the review of official school documents such as the school's inclusive education policy, curriculum plans, IEPs, attendance records, and notes on child progress and development (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010; Irani & Setiyatna, 2024). Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model involving three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, as cited in Irani & Setiyatna, 2024). Data reduction included transcribing interviews, coding recurring themes, and identifying patterns and relationships. Data display involved organizing information into tables, matrices, and narrative summaries for easier interpretation. Conclusion drawing and verification were ongoing throughout the process, allowing for the refinement and validation of findings through triangulation and member checking (Mitchell, 2015; Salend, 2016).

Triangulation was used to enhance the credibility and validity of the research. This included triangulation of data sources (comparing information from teachers, parents, and professionals), methods (using interviews, observations, and documentation), and theory (relating findings to existing frameworks of inclusive education) (UNESCO, 2019; Booth & Ainscow, 2019). Ethical considerations were paramount in this research. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. All personal identifiers were removed from the final report to protect the privacy of individuals and the school community (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018). This comprehensive methodological approach was designed to ensure the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the findings, and to provide actionable recommendations for improving

inclusive practice in early childhood education settings (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Loreman, 2017; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of inclusive education at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura has gradually developed over the past several years. As an institution characterized by its acceptance of children with a range of special needs such as speech delay, ADHD, and cerebral palsy TK Aisyiyah integrates these students alongside their typically developing peers in the same classroom environment (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Putri, 2022). Based on initial identification, there are eight children with special needs in this school, with cases of speech delay being the most dominant. These children generally experience delays in verbal communication, have limited vocabulary, and face challenges in constructing sentences. Meanwhile, children with ADHD often display hyperactive behavior and difficulty maintaining focus, while those with cerebral palsy encounter obstacles in motor skills and coordination. Current interventions remain largely generalized, utilizing visual supports, repetition of instructions, and external therapy. However, there are not yet dedicated support teachers or optimal implementation of individualized learning programs (IEPs) (Al Sabatin, 2020; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017).

Planning

In terms of planning, TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura has started to design inclusive education through the identification of children's needs, internal discussions between the school principal and teachers, and the development of flexible learning programs. Teacher training involving professionals has also supported this planning process. However, formal documents such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and strong written policies are still lacking, indicating that the institution is in the early stages of building a comprehensive inclusive education system (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010; UNESCO, 2019). The planning process aligns with recommendations from recent literature, which emphasize the necessity of ongoing assessment and collaboration among all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and professionals, to design learning environments that meet the diverse needs of every child (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018; Mitchell, 2015). However, the absence of systematic documentation and policy frameworks limits the sustainability and scalability of inclusive practices in the school context (Salend, 2016; Loreman, 2017).

Implementation

During implementation, inclusive learning is conducted by integrating children with special needs into regular classes. Teachers take an active role in adapting instructional methods, though these adjustments are still broad rather than tailored to specific individual requirements. The lack of special education support teachers is a significant barrier to effective

inclusion. Nevertheless, the commitment and professional development of teachers, as well as active parental involvement—especially in supporting out-of-school therapy—help maintain the momentum of inclusive practices (Al Sabatin, 2020; Smith et al., 2020). The study found that instructional strategies used by teachers include the use of visual media, breaking down instructions into smaller steps, and providing additional time for task completion. While these approaches align with principles of universal design for learning, their impact is limited by the absence of individualized supports and continuous professional collaboration (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017).

Evaluation

Evaluation of children's progress is mainly conducted through informal observation and simple record-keeping. There is no structured or ongoing monitoring system; assessments are largely based on general observation, which restricts the effectiveness of evaluation as a basis for individualized program planning (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Salend, 2016). Current evaluation practices tend to focus on general behavioral, communicative, and participatory aspects of children's development. However, the lack of systematic and sustainable assessment tools prevents the establishment of clear developmental trajectories or the adjustment of interventions as needed (Turnbull et al., 2019).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The research also identified several supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of inclusive education. Supporting factors include the commitment of the school leadership, the active involvement of teachers, and parental support, particularly in facilitating therapy outside school. Inhibiting factors consist of limited human resources, the absence of dedicated support teachers, inadequate support facilities, and suboptimal collaboration with professionals such as psychologists and therapists (Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010; UNESCO, 2019). This finding resonates with much of the literature, which underscores that successful inclusive education requires not only teacher commitment but also sufficient resources, support systems, and ongoing professional collaboration (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018). Conceptually, the implementation of inclusive education demands adjustments in curriculum, instructional strategies, and evaluation systems, all oriented toward the unique needs of each learner (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Loreman, 2017). The findings show that although the principle of inclusion has started to be adopted, practical implementation in the field still requires significant strengthening especially in systematic planning, individualized instructional delivery, and continuous evaluation (Mitchell, 2015).

The absence of formal IEPs, insufficient professional support, and the lack of structured evaluation tools mean that the school's inclusive practices are still in the developmental phase.

Strengthening internal policies, improving teacher competencies through further training, and reinforcing partnerships with external professionals are essential steps to achieving optimal inclusive education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; UNESCO, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of inclusive education at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura is underway but remains in the developmental stage. In planning, the school has initiated needs identification, curriculum modification, and teacher training with input from various stakeholders. However, planning is not yet fully systematic due to the absence of formal documentation such as Individualized Education Programs and limitations in available resources (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010; Irani & Setiyatna, 2024). In implementation, inclusive education is carried out by integrating children with special needs into regular classes. Teachers flexibly adjust instructional methods and prioritize individualized approaches, empathy, and social interaction. Nevertheless, effective implementation is constrained by the lack of support teachers and the absence of structured individualized learning programs (Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Smith et al., 2020).

In evaluation, assessments are performed informally through observation and parent communication, focusing mainly on behavioral, communicative, and participatory development. However, the absence of systematic, ongoing assessment tools hampers the ability to accurately track and support individual progress (Salend, 2016; Turnbull et al., 2019). Overall, the implementation of inclusive education at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura is supported by school commitment, active teacher engagement, and parental involvement. However, there is still a need for further strengthening in planning, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that inclusive education is carried out more effectively, systematically, and professionally (Mitchell, 2015; Booth & Ainscow, 2019; Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017). Recommendations for improvement include the development of internal policies, systematic use of IEPs, ongoing teacher professional development in inclusive practices, investment in support facilities, and establishing stronger collaborations with professionals such as psychologists and therapists. These steps are essential to ensure the sustainability and quality of inclusive education, not only at TK Aisyiyah Ranting V Martapura but also as a model for other early childhood education institutions (UNESCO, 2019; Loreman, 2017).

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