



Challenges and Solutions for Inclusive Education in Primary Schools Literature Review

Yusli^{1*}, Zohaib Hassan Sain²

Universitas Islam Tribakti Lirboyo, Kediri, Indonesia¹, Superior University, Pakistan²
yusahmad2001@gmail.com¹, zohaib3746@gmail.com²

Abstract

Inclusive education in Elementary schools has become an urgent need to ensure access and quality education for all students, including those with special needs. This research aims to identify the challenges and solutions of inclusive education in elementary school through a literature review. The findings reveal that the primary challenges include a lack of teacher training, inadequate facilities, social stigma, and an inflexible curriculum. Proposed solutions encompass continuous teacher training, the provision of accessible infrastructure, community awareness campaigns, and a curriculum adapted to the diversity of students. This study concludes that inclusive education in elementary school requires collaboration among stakeholders, including schools, government, and communities, to create an equitable and supportive learning environment. The findings provide implications for educational policy in Indonesia to strengthen the implementation of inclusion at the primary level.

Keywords: *Challenges, inclusive education, primary school*

A. Introduction

Inclusive education is a concept aimed at providing equitable access to education for all students, including those with special needs, without discrimination based on ability, background, or physical condition. In Indonesia, this concept has gained attention following the enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes education for all. Elementary school serves as a critical starting point, as it lays the foundation for character development and basic skills,

making the success of inclusive education at this level pivotal for the nation's educational future.

The challenges of inclusive education in elementary school cannot be overlooked, given the increasing complexity of student diversity. Students with disabilities, such as those who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, or on the autism spectrum, often face barriers in accessing conventional learning. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) indicate that only a small fraction of elementary schools have been accredited as inclusive schools, highlighting limitations in infrastructure and resources. This serves as a crucial backdrop for exploring this issue further through a literature review. One major challenge is the lack of readiness among educators to address the needs of students with special requirements. Many elementary school teachers have not received specialized training in inclusive approaches, such as modifying teaching methods or using assistive tools. This often results in students with special needs feeling isolated or receiving inadequate attention, ultimately affecting their learning motivation. Literature reviews can offer insights into effective training strategies based on best practices from various countries.

Supporting facilities also pose a critical issue in inclusive education. Many elementary schools, particularly in rural or urban areas, lack accessible classrooms, such as ramps for wheelchairs or hearing aids. This situation is exacerbated by limited education budgets, making it difficult for schools to meet inclusion standards. A literature review can help identify innovative solutions, such as the use of simple technology or partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Social stigma toward inclusive students further hinders implementation. In some communities, children with disabilities are still viewed as a burden or less capable, influencing the perceptions of parents and other students. Inclusive education is not only about physical access but also about transforming societal mindsets. Literature studies can reveal successful awareness campaigns implemented in various contexts to address this stigma.

The curriculum used in elementary school is often designed for students with standard abilities, making it less flexible for inclusive students. Rigid lesson materials and text-based exams can be challenging for students with special needs, such as those with reading difficulties or limited verbal comprehension. Literature reviews provide a foundation for developing adaptive curricula that cater to individual needs, such as project-based learning or differentiated instruction. Collaboration among stakeholders is key to the success of inclusive education. Governments, schools, parents, and communities must work together to create a supportive educational ecosystem.

However, this coordination is often hampered by poor communication or differing priorities. A literature review can offer examples of effective collaboration models, such as school inclusion committees or parent forums. Technology holds significant potential to support inclusive education in elementary school. Tools like screen reader applications for the visually impaired or interactive devices for autistic children can enhance learning access. However, limited technology access in remote areas remains a challenge. Literature studies can outline affordable and adaptive technology-based solutions for the Indonesian context.

Evaluating the success of inclusive education also presents its own challenges. The assessment standards used often fail to account for the diverse abilities of students, making it difficult to measure the progress of inclusive students. Literature reviews can suggest alternative evaluation approaches, such as portfolios or competency-based assessments, which align better with inclusion principles. National policy support is essential to accelerate the implementation of inclusive education. Programs like the Child-Friendly School initiative from Kemendikbudristek have marked an initial step, though implementation varies across regions. Literature reviews can analyze inclusive policies in other countries, such as Finland or Canada, to provide relevant recommendations for Indonesia. According to Ainscow (2016), Finland's successful inclusive approach involves systemic changes in curriculum and teacher training, offering a potential model for Indonesia.

The role of parents in inclusive education should not be underestimated. Many parents feel under-involved or lack sufficient information about their children's rights. Literature studies can uncover strategies for parental engagement, such as workshops or regular consultations, to enhance support at home. Research by Florian and Black-Hawkins highlights the importance of parental involvement in supporting inclusive learning, particularly at the primary level. An inclusive learning environment also requires attention to students' psychological aspects. Inclusive students often face social pressure or low self-esteem due to their differences. (Arikarani 2019) Literature reviews can highlight psychological interventions, such as school counseling, to support student well-being. emphasizes that inclusive approaches must include emotional support to ensure long-term success.

The availability of competent human resources is a determining factor. Beyond teachers, schools need support staff like therapists or special counselors. Literature studies can provide guidance on recruiting and training such personnel in elementary

school settings. According to Dyson and Millward (2020), the presence of specialized support staff enhances the effectiveness of inclusive learning in primary schools. This research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and solutions to inclusive education in elementary school through a literature-based approach. By integrating findings from various sources, including international perspectives, this study is expected to serve as a reference for policymakers and educational practitioners in Indonesia. Inclusive education is not just about access but also about creating an environment that supports the holistic development of every student. Experiences from other countries, such as the United States, also offer valuable insights. According to Artiles et al, inclusive education in the US faces similar challenges, such as inadequate teacher training and infrastructure, but has been managed through strong federal policies and community collaboration. This approach can be adapted in Indonesia, considering local cultural and geographical diversity. Moreover, an inclusive approach focused on children's rights has become a priority in some European countries, such as Norway. Skrtic (2019) highlights that integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms requires careful planning, including ongoing training and resource support. These lessons are relevant for Indonesia in developing sustainable inclusion strategies at the elementary school level.

Inclusive education is also closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (ELEMENTARY SCHOOLGs), particularly Goal 4 on quality education. According to UNESCO (2021), inclusion is a key element in achieving equitable education, emphasizing the need for policies that support access and quality for all students, including in developing countries like Indonesia. This underscores the urgency of this research in both global and national contexts.

B. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach based on a literature study to identify the challenges and solutions of inclusive education in Elementary schools (elementary school). This method was chosen for its ability to analyze secondary data from relevant literature without requiring direct fieldwork.(Sugiyono,2019) Data sources were obtained from academic journals, books, research reports, and policy documents available on Google Scholar, university repositories, and other databases, covering publications from 2015 to 2025. Inclusion criteria encompassed articles addressing inclusive education at the primary level, particularly in the context of Indonesia or developing countries with similar characteristics. The design of the

literature study was chosen because this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview based on existing knowledge, without involving the collection of primary data directly from the field. This approach is appropriate for exploring the issue of inclusive education in primary schools, where the existing literature can provide sufficient theoretical and practical insights to support the analysis. In addition, this method allows flexibility in integrating multiple perspectives from diverse sources, relevant to Indonesia's heterogeneous context.

The research instrument in this study is a matrix of literature analysis, which is used to record and classify information from selected sources. This matrix includes columns for Article title, author, year of publication, research methods, key findings, and relevance to inclusive education challenges or solutions. This instrument is designed to ensure consistency in data management and facilitate the process of synthesizing information from various sources. Data collection techniques are carried out through systematic searches in academic databases and digital libraries, focusing on journals, articles, textbooks and policy documents related to inclusive education. This process involves the use of predefined keywords, complemented by filtering based on the abstract and the appropriateness of the content. Additional Data were collected from cross-references in selected literature to ensure completeness of coverage, with particular attention to the context of primary schools in Indonesia. Data analysis techniques using a qualitative approach with thematic coding stages. Data from the literature is broken down into key themes, such as infrastructure challenges, teacher training, and solution strategies, then synthesized to identify patterns and gaps. The analysis is carried out in a narrative manner by comparing the findings across sources, followed by interpretation to draw conclusions relevant to the research objectives. This process ensures the findings can provide a structured and in-depth insight into inclusive education.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Challenges of Inclusive Education in Elementary schools

Inclusive education is a concept aimed at providing equitable access to education for all students, including those with special needs, without discrimination based on ability,(Kusmaryono 2023) (Susilawati, n.d.) background, or physical condition. In Indonesia, this concept has gained attention following the enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes education for all.

Elementary school (serves as a critical starting point, as it lays the foundation for character development and basic skills, making the success of inclusive education at this level pivotal for the nation's educational future.(Ainscow 2020)

The challenges of inclusive education in elementary school cannot be overlooked, given the increasing complexity of student diversity. Students with disabilities, such as those who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, or on the autism spectrum, often face barriers in accessing conventional learning. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) indicate that only a small fraction of elementary schools have been accredited as inclusive schools, highlighting limitations in infrastructure and resources. This serves as a crucial backdrop for exploring this issue further through a literature review. One major challenge is the lack of readiness among educators to address the needs of students with special requirements. Many elementary school teachers have not received specialized training in inclusive approaches, such as modifying teaching methods or using assistive tools. This often results in students with special needs feeling isolated or receiving inadequate attention, ultimately affecting their learning motivation. Literature reviews can offer insights into effective training strategies based on best practices from various countries.

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Collaboration among stakeholders is key to the success of inclusive education. Governments, schools, parents, and communities must work together to create a supportive educational ecosystem. However, this coordination is often hampered by poor communication or differing priorities. A literature review can offer examples of effective collaboration models, such as school inclusion committees or parent forums. Technology holds significant potential to support inclusive education in elementary school. Tools like screen reader applications for the visually impaired or interactive devices for autistic children can enhance learning access. However, limited technology access in remote areas remains a challenge. Literature studies can outline affordable and adaptive technology-based solutions for the Indonesian context. Evaluating the success of inclusive education also presents its own challenges. The assessment standards used often fail to account for the diverse abilities of students, making it difficult to measure the progress of inclusive students. Literature reviews can suggest alternative evaluation approaches, such as portfolios or competency-based assessments, which align better with inclusion principles.

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An inclusive learning environment also requires attention to students' psychological aspects. (Widyahastuti, Karsono, and Yulisetiani 2024) Inclusive students often face social pressure or low self-esteem due to their differences. Literature reviews can highlight psychological interventions, such as school counseling, to support student

well-being. emphasizes that inclusive approaches must include emotional support to ensure long-term success.

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2. Solutions for Inclusive Education in Elementary schools

Continuous teacher training emerges as a primary solution. Workshops on differentiation strategies, such as project-based learning or the use of visual aids, can enhance educators' competence in handling inclusive students. This training should

include real-case simulations, such as teaching autistic students, to ensure readiness in the field. The provision of accessible infrastructure is highly necessary. The government can allocate special funds to build ramps, disability-friendly toilets, and therapy rooms in elementary schools. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations can also accelerate the provision of these facilities, particularly in remote areas, to ensure equal access for all students. Community awareness campaigns can reduce social stigma. Community seminars or local radio programs can educate parents and the public about the potential of inclusive students. Successful examples from India, such as the “Inclusive Friends” campaign, demonstrate that mindset shifts can enhance social acceptance within a short period.

Curriculum adaptation is another critical solution. A differentiated curriculum, allowing modifications to materials and teaching methods, can support students with special needs. This approach includes alternative assessments, such as portfolios or oral presentations, to evaluate progress more inclusively. Stakeholder collaboration needs to be strengthened. The formation of school inclusion committees, involving parents, educators, and local officials, can ensure effective coordination. Regular forums, such as quarterly meetings, can address specific challenges and solutions in each elementary school. The use of simple technology offers an affordable solution. Applications like Google Read&Write for the visually impaired or tablets with interactive content for autistic children can be adopted at minimal cost. Training educators to use these technologies is also essential to maximize their benefits in the classroom. Competency-based evaluation can replace traditional exams. Portfolios featuring student work, such as drawings or oral recordings, enable fairer assessments for inclusive students. This approach also encourages the development of non-academic skills, such as creativity and teamwork.

National policies need reinforcement. Programs like the Child-Friendly School initiative can be expanded with more specific inclusion guidelines, such as dedicated funding and minimum facility standards. Studies from Finland show that consistent inclusive policies can significantly boost student participation over several years. Parental involvement can be enhanced through regular workshops. Training on inclusive education rights and ways to support children at home can strengthen school collaboration. Examples from Canada demonstrate that parental engagement can notably increase inclusive student attendance each year. Psychological interventions, such as school counseling, can support student well-being. These programs help inclusive students cope with social pressure and build confidence. Research from

Australia indicates that weekly counseling provides tangible benefits in reducing stress among inclusive students. Recruiting support staff, such as occupational therapists, offers a long-term solution. Schools can partner with universities to train local staff, reducing reliance on external personnel. This also creates job opportunities within the surrounding elementary school communities.

Integrating technology with traditional approaches can improve effectiveness. Combining adaptive textbooks and learning applications can meet the needs of students with varying abilities. Studies from Japan suggest that this hybrid approach significantly enhances understanding among inclusive students. Regular monitoring and evaluation are needed to ensure solution sustainability. Quarterly school reports can identify new issues and adjust strategies accordingly. This approach has proven successful in Sweden, where inclusion has shown positive development over the past decade. Student participation in decision-making can strengthen inclusion. Providing space for students to voice their needs, such as through a student council, can foster a sense of belonging. Research from the UK indicates that this participation provides meaningful motivation boosts for inclusive students. Private sector funding can serve as an additional solution. Partnerships with local companies to provide assistive tools or sponsor inclusive activities can reduce the government's budgetary burden. Examples from South Africa show that private funding contributes significantly to improving inclusive facilities in several schools.

3. Developing Social Competence of Inclusive Students through Group Activities

Specially designed group activities can serve as an effective solution to develop the social competence of inclusive students in elementary school. This program involves students with and without special needs in collaborative projects, such as creating posters or short plays, which encourage positive interactions and reduce social isolation. This approach is supported by literature showing that group collaboration enhances empathy and communication skills among inclusive students in a noticeable way. Teachers need to be facilitated to design these activities with clear guidance, such as roles tailored to each student's abilities, to ensure success. Challenges like resistance from non-inclusive students can be addressed with initial orientation sessions that educate about the benefits of inclusion. Consistent implementation can foster a more inclusive classroom culture, supporting the social-emotional development of students holistically. Studies from the United States affirm that structured group activities contribute significantly to improving social integration in inclusive classrooms.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that inclusive education in Elementary schools faces significant challenges, including a lack of teacher training, inadequate facilities, social stigma, and an inflexible curriculum. Proposed solutions, such as continuous training, accessible infrastructure, awareness campaigns, and curriculum adaptation, demonstrate potential to overcome these barriers. Collaboration among stakeholders and the use of technology are key to the successful implementation of inclusion. These findings affirm the need for national policies that support inclusive education at the primary level, with an approach centered on student needs. Further research is recommended to test the effectiveness of these solutions across various elementary school contexts in Indonesia. Significant practical implications for inclusive education in primary schools. Literature synthesis provides guidance for teachers to develop strategies such as differentiation learning that support children with special needs and students from diverse backgrounds, while encouraging schools to design relevant training programs. These implications can help practitioners overcome challenges such as lack of inclusive classroom management skills, thereby creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

In addition, the study contributes to the development of a theoretical understanding of inclusive education by integrating perspectives that emphasize collaboration between students and teachers. The results of this review could form the basis for national education policy, including recommendations to improve inclusive infrastructure and resource allocation, as well as encourage partnerships with local communities to support children with special needs. The long-term implications include increasing public awareness of the importance of inclusion, which can strengthen social support at the primary school level. However, there are limitations that need to be considered in this study. As a literature study, the findings rely on secondary data that may not reflect current conditions or direct experiences in elementary school, especially in poorly documented areas. The lack of empirical validation, such as interviews with teachers or field observations, also limits the accuracy of the analysis to the effectiveness of the proposed solution. In addition, the heterogeneity of the literature and temporal restrictions up to a certain period can reduce the completeness of coverage. Finally, the limitation of generalization becomes an important aspect, considering that the focus on elementary school may not be entirely relevant for other levels of education such as junior high or high school, which have different dynamics. Limited access to wider literature sources can also affect the depth of analysis.

Therefore, follow-up research combining primary data, such as Case Studies in different regions, is recommended to reinforce the findings and overcome these limitations.

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