

# Towards Inclusive Education: A Conceptual Model for Curriculum Management in Inclusive Schools

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## Abstract:

*Providing access to learning in inclusive schools for children with special needs in Indonesia is still concerning. The implementation of the curriculum in inclusive schools has not been able to accommodate all Children with Special Needs. This study aimed to find a conceptual model of curriculum management as an alternative and practical approach to implementing inclusive schools. This study was conducted in one of the elementary schools in Yogyakarta using qualitative methods with case study. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Triangulation of sources, techniques, and time was used to test the validity of the data to test the validity of the data. Data analysis includes collection, reduction, presentation, and verification/conclusions. The study results indicate that inclusive curriculum management has been implemented and structured through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating/assessing, considering all aspects involved in the process. The results of this study can be used as a guideline for implementing curriculum management in inclusive schools. However, further research is needed on the effectiveness of implementing curriculum management in inclusive schools and a more in-depth study of the obstacles and challenges in implementing curriculum management in inclusive schools.*

**Key Words:** Access to Learning, Inclusive Schools, Children with Special Needs

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## INTRODUCTION

Fulfillment of access to education in inclusive schools for students with special needs in Indonesia is still a pressing issue. Several challenges that hinder its implementation include the lack of socialization regarding inclusive education practices and resistance from peers in regular classes (Kilinc, 2022; Moura & Fontes, 2023; Shevlin & Banks, 2021), who consider the presence of students with special needs to slow down the learning process (Khamzina et al., 2021; Suyudi et al., 2022). Finding access to education also has several obstacles, such as the lack of special assistant teachers (Andrews et al., 2021; Li & Ruppap, 2021), low teacher competence (Breyer et al., 2021; Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2023), and lack of understanding of special needs education (Andrews et al., 2021; Cook & Ogden, 2022; Dababneh & Zboon, 2022; Taneja-Johansson et al., 2023). Other obstacles

are inappropriate teacher qualifications, financial constraints, and ineffective parental communication (Cao et al., 2023; Coviello & DeMatthews, 2021; Ravet & Mtika, 2024). These problems highlight the need for a stronger strategy to support inclusive education.

Inclusive schools are designed to serve all children without discrimination, highly dependent on the effectiveness of their curriculum (Budnyk et al., 2022; Byrne, 2022; Coviello & DeMatthews, 2021). The curriculum in these schools must accommodate the diverse abilities and needs of students with special needs, which requires regular evaluation and modification (Efendi et al., 2022; Strogilos et al., 2023). However, research shows that the curriculum in many inclusive schools often fails to meet these requirements effectively. Although the curriculum plays an important role in inclusive education, its implementation is often less than optimal in achieving the expected learning outcomes (Humaira et al., 2021; Lambrecht et al., 2022; Weiss et al., 2021). This gap requires focused efforts to bridge the gap between inclusive curriculum principles and classroom practices.

Previous research has highlighted the challenges of implementing an inclusive curriculum. Many schools lack the resources or expertise to modify their curriculum to suit the needs of students with special needs (Ruppar et al., 2023), while others struggle with low teacher competency (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021; Roberts & Webster, 2022), insufficient funding, and inadequate parental support (Madondo, 2021; Nursaniah, 2023). These limitations highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to inclusive curriculum management that effectively integrates the planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating processes (Breyer et al., 2021; Moura & Fontes, 2023). Furthermore, successful implementation often requires collaboration between educators, special tutors, and parents, emphasizing the importance of community involvement in achieving inclusive education goals.

Implementing inclusive schools is certainly one alternative to achieving equitable education, although it faces various challenges, such as one school in Yogyakarta. One stands out as a leading city in Indonesia for its inclusive education initiative. With its designation as an Inclusive City and recognition by UNESCO, Yogyakarta has made significant strides in accommodating students with special needs in public schools (Arlinwibowo, 2021; Somad et al., 2024). SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta is a model of effective curriculum management in an inclusive school, which shows success in providing special services for students with special needs, such as individual education programs, regular assessments, and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders. This success provides an opportunity to learn best practices in inclusive curriculum management.

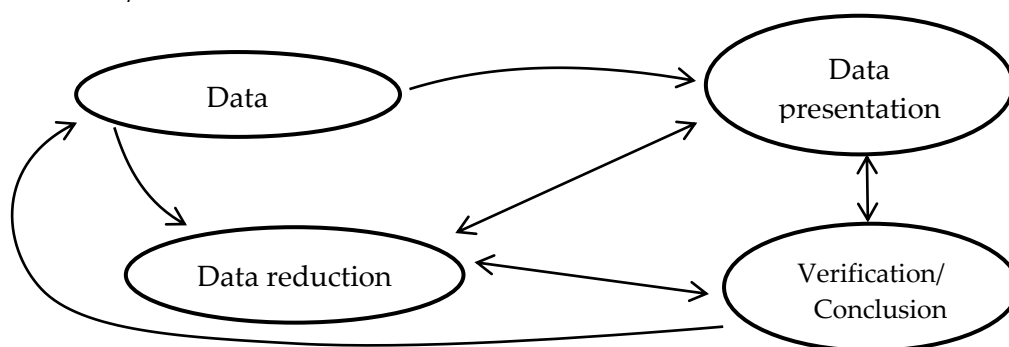
This study aims to develop a conceptual model of curriculum management as an effective alternative to implementing inclusive education at SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta. This study seeks to identify solutions and transformations of inclusive education by analyzing the curriculum management

practices of SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta to bridge the gap in inclusive education in Indonesia. These findings are expected to provide insights and practical strategies as a contribution to the paper to improve the effectiveness of curriculum management in inclusive schools, ultimately improving access and educational outcomes for students with special needs.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena that occur holistically (Williams, 2021), using a case study approach to determine the situation and conditions that occur directly. A case study approach was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of implementing curriculum management in inclusive schools. This study aims to find a conceptual model of curriculum management as an effective alternative approach to implementing curriculum management in inclusive schools.

Three research instruments were used: the interview guideline, the observation guideline, and the documentation guideline. The subjects in this study were determined using purposive sampling techniques. To avoid generalizing the findings, it is necessary to determine the criteria for research subjects, namely the parties involved in implementing curriculum management at SDN Giwangan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. which includes school principals (P1), curriculum development team coordinators (P2), and teachers (classroom teachers (P3) and special supervising teachers (P4)). Triangulation tests were carried out on sources, techniques, and time to test the validity of the data. Data analysis activities include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification/conclusion.



**Figure 1. Data Analysis Techniques**

Figure 1, the activity starts with data collection, namely recording all phenomena findings in the field through interviews, observation, and documentation. This data reduction process is carried out to summarize and focus on data related to the research theme, as well as removing data that is not needed. After data reduction, the next step is presenting the data by classifying it according to the subject matter in charts and brief descriptions. The final step is drawing conclusions based on the data obtained during the research activities.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Planning of Inclusive Curriculum

Curriculum planning is a guideline that contains instructions for implementing learning to achieve the expected goals. Curriculum planning is the process of preparing educational goals and educational standards to achieve goals. The inclusive curriculum planning process at SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta begins with PPDB (New Student Admissions) by opening two registration pathways, namely the regular pathway and the disability pathway, which accepts all forms of disabilities. The PPDB disability pathway is carried out to identify and assess students' needs and abilities, which will be used to determine academic service programs for students with special needs in the classroom. As stated by P3, "The school opens two student admission pathways, namely the regular pathway and the disability pathway, which will later become the basis for determining special service programs for students with special needs."

This is relevant to the research results from the interview, which state that there are two types of inclusive school PPDB systems: regular and disability pathway systems. The PPDB process must accommodate all children through an initial assessment process in the form of physical/motor development assessments, language and speech development assessments, social-emotional development assessments, cognitive development assessments, and sensory and perceptual development assessments—examination results from general practitioners or specialist doctors. As stated by P1 who said that; "So far, we can still accept all forms of children's disabilities. We do not discriminate here as long as we can handle it."

The PPDB quota every new school year; ideally, schools receive a maximum of 4 students with Special Needs. The initial assessment process for students with Special Needs greatly determines the success of inclusive education. The initial assessment was carried out during PPDB for students with special needs based on academic, psychomotor, and self-development aspects. As stated by P4, "Students who register through the disability pathway must bring proof of assessment results from a hospital or psychiatrist showing that their child has a disability. In addition, an independent assessment is carried out by a special assistant teacher to identify whether the child's behaviour is included as a special needs student or not."

Then proceed with the curriculum preparation process, as stated by P1, who explained: "The process of preparing the curriculum includes the socialization process, forming a curriculum development team, mapping the program, preparing a curriculum draft that is adapted to the guidelines from the education office and adjusted to school needs, reviewing and revising the curriculum and getting a recommendation from the supervisor for approval of the curriculum by the Education Office."

The curriculum development team created a learning program by mapping learning targets, then socialized and conducted counseling. In curriculum planning, these must follow curriculum guidelines tailored to school needs and map out school programs to achieve short-term and long-term goals. Developing an inclusive curriculum aims to equalize students with Special Needs with regular children.

### **Organizing an Inclusive Curriculum**

The organizing process is an activity related to details and division of tasks to facilitate the implementation of learning activities so that learning objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently. The process of organizing an inclusive curriculum at SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta, as stated by P2, is that; "The organizing process includes the formation of a curriculum implementation team, curriculum mapping, education and socialization related to curriculum integration, modification of the RPP (lesson plan), and finally the assignment of special assistant teachers to accompany students with special needs."

Furthermore, P3 said, "Organizing the curriculum uses the curriculum integration method, by mapping in the preparation of curriculum modifications, especially on teaching tools for students with special needs." Curriculum integration in the classroom combines the national Curriculum and modified Curriculum for students with special needs. Classroom curriculum integration is done by class teachers who collaborate with special assistant teachers. In curriculum integration, teachers and special assistant teachers together develop learning models and learning media, as well as map learning materials that are adjusted to the needs and abilities of students.

This is relevant to several research results. The placement of grouped subjects can recognize an Integrated Curriculum, and the material's content is integrated between subjects. The Integrated Curriculum is realized by creating a learning process that combines three domains: the emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. In addition, teachers receive guidance, direction, and training related to integrating learning, classroom management, and students with Special Needs services without neglecting regular students. The lesson plan for students with special needs learning differs from that for regular students; learning tools are prepared based on the 2013 curriculum. Special teacher plays an important role in assisting students with special needs. Special teachers modify lesson plans according to the needs and characteristics of students.

### **Implementation of Inclusive Curriculum**

Implementing an inclusive curriculum uses the Full Inclusion method; students with special needs are combined in regular classes with other children. As stated by P1, "Implementation activities include curriculum integration activities in learning activities, the use of modified RP for learning for students with special needs, Collaboration between class teachers and special assistant

teachers in developing learning materials and teaching materials. Furthermore, a special service program for students with special needs is carried out flexibly. The school and the Disability Service Unit carry out periodic assessment activities."

Integrating learning in inclusive schools must accommodate all needs according to the abilities of each student with special needs. This includes special education services such as therapy assistance and ongoing learning consultations. As conveyed by P3, "Collaboration between class teachers and special assistant teachers is carried out by dividing roles and responsibilities. Special assistant teachers identify students with special needs, class teachers modify the lesson plans, and then both work together to compile materials, teaching resources, and integrate learning in the classroom." This collaborative approach ensures that the unique needs of each student are addressed effectively.

In addition to Collaboration in designing and developing learning materials, teaching resources, and lesson plans, it is crucial to utilize adaptive learning media tailored to the specific needs and challenges of students with special needs. Adaptive learning media, such as visual aids, tactile tools, and assistive technologies, can significantly enhance the learning experience by making educational content more accessible and engaging. For instance, students with visual impairments may benefit from braille materials or audio-based resources, while those with hearing impairments may require sign language interpreters or captioning tools. Inclusive schools can create a more equitable and supportive learning environment that empowers all students to reach their full potential by incorporating these adaptive strategies.

### **Assessment of Inclusive Curriculum**

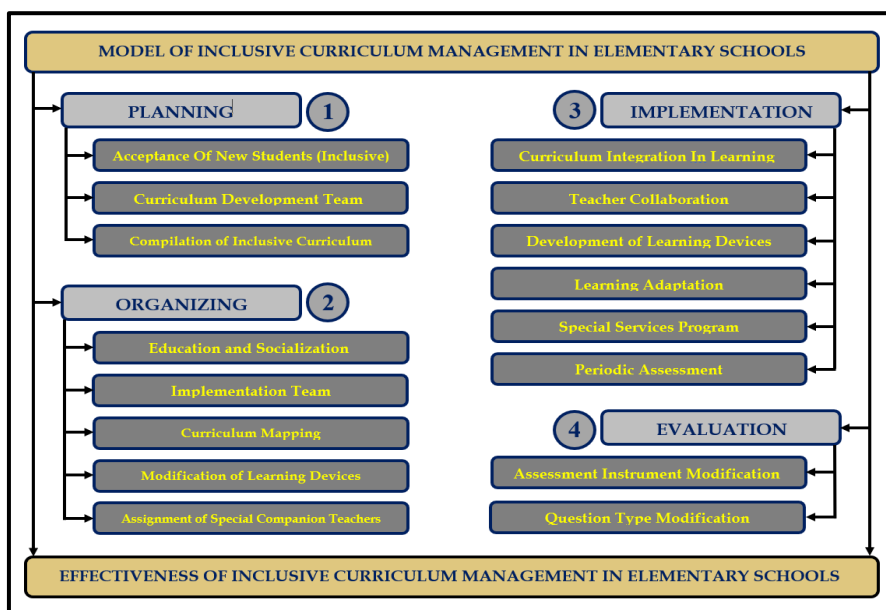
Assessment collects data and processes information to measure academic and non-academic student learning outcomes. The assessment results are used as evaluation material for the student's learning process. The assessment process for students with special needs at SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta, as stated by P4, includes, "The assessment process is carried out by modifying the assessment instrument to suit the abilities of each special needs student, modifying the questions, including daily test questions, mid-semester assessments and end-of-semester assessments, then for the recapitulation of scores between regular students and special needs students are equalized. Meanwhile, special needs students with severe special needs are not included in the formal exam."

The assessment of learning outcomes for students with special needs requires modification of the assessment instrument, the form of the questions, the level of difficulty, the number of questions, and the time for working on the questions according to the types of needs and learning obstacles for students with special needs. Meanwhile, the evaluation of students with special needs and regular students is the same, involving the evaluation of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. It is just that the scores obtained by students with special needs have

different meanings from regular students; for example, a score of 80 with special needs will be considered better than the value of 80 regular children. Therefore, students with special needs will later receive a special certificate that is different from a regular child's certificate.

## Discussion

Based on the data analysis process that has been carried out, the inclusive curriculum management model is divided into 4, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Various indicators can be observed in the four stages of the curriculum management model. In general, the four stages of the curriculum management model can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Model of Inclusive Curriculum Management in Elementary Schools**

The inclusive curriculum planning process emphasizes identifying the needs of students with special needs through the unique PPDB pathway for disabilities. This process allows schools to conduct initial assessments to understand students' specific needs, which become the basis for compiling academic service programs. This is in line with several similar studies which state that the development of an inclusive curriculum must begin with identifying learning barriers and developing strategies to overcome them (Efendi et al., 2022; Humaira et al., 2021) in order to support the educational success of all students.

The stage of organizing an inclusive curriculum integrates the national curriculum with modifications tailored for students with special needs. Collaboration between class teachers and special assistant teachers is key to designing relevant teaching materials and learning media. The emphasis on collaboration supports the findings of Breyer et al. (2021), which show that a collaborative approach to inclusive teaching increases the effectiveness of

learning because it optimizes the strengths of various parties and accommodates the needs of students from various backgrounds.

Implementing the complete inclusion method allows students with special needs to learn together in regular classes. This approach reinforces the principles of equality and inclusivity in education, as several studies have shown that true inclusion does not only involve students with special needs in regular classes but also ensures that they receive services that support full participation and learning success (Suyudi et al., 2022)—activities such as learning consultations and therapy support student success (Breyer et al., 2021).

This school's inclusive curriculum assessment process is carried out by modifying the assessment instrument according to the abilities of students with special needs. This reflects the importance of a differentiation approach in assessment. Budnyk et al. (2022) suggested that differentiation assessment allows a more accurate measurement of learning outcomes according to individual student needs. In addition, different treatment in the assessment of students with special needs reflects an effort to respect the diversity of abilities and give appreciation to individual progress, which supports the concept of inclusivity in education (Khotimah et al., 2024; Li & Ruppap, 2021; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023; Zaini, 2023).

The findings support the idea that inclusive education is not only about policy but also concrete practices that integrate special services for students with special needs into the regular education system so that it can be a reference in formulating broader inclusive education policies. The research findings are expected to significantly enrich the discourse on implementing inclusive education at the elementary school level, especially in the context of public schools in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The key finding from this study is that inclusive curriculum management at SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta has been effectively structured through a comprehensive process that includes planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating/assessing all aspects involved. The study highlights the importance of a well-organized framework to ensure that curriculum management in inclusive schools meets the needs of diverse students. The insights gained from this research contribute to the existing knowledge by providing practical guidelines for implementing curriculum management in inclusive education settings. This research offers an updated perspective on inclusive education practices, emphasizing the need for continuous evaluation and adjustments to serve all students better.

However, the study has several limitations. It focuses solely on SDN Giwangan Yogyakarta, which means the findings are context-specific and may not fully reflect the broader challenges or solutions applicable to other inclusive schools in different regions. The study's scope was also limited by gender, age,



and methodological approaches. Future research should explore these aspects further, particularly by using surveys to gather data from a broader range of schools and diverse student populations. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding and allow for more accurate, targeted policy recommendations to enhance the implementation of inclusive curriculum management in various educational contexts.

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