



Analysis of Inclusive Curriculum Design in Elementary Schools: A Case Study in Inclusive Pilot Schools

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis desain kurikulum sekolah inklusi di sekolah dasar. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif studi kasus. Subjek penelitian ini dilakukan oleh guru dan siswa kelas V menggunakan purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan dalam aneka macam cara meliputi angket, observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi. Analisis dalam pandangan ini meliputi tiga alur kegiatan, yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa desain kurikulum yang diterapkan di sekolah inklusi menggunakan pendekatan modifikasi dan individualisasi, yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa ABK. Pemahaman guru terhadap kurikulum inklusi tergolong baik, yang memungkinkan mereka untuk mengimplementasikan pembelajaran yang lebih inklusif dan efektif. Simpulan penelitian yaitu desain kurikulum yang banyak digunakan di sekolah dasar adalah kurikulum

modifikasi dan individualisasi yang harus dipahami oleh guru.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the inclusive school curriculum design in elementary schools. The research method used in this study is qualitative case study. The subjects of the study are teachers and fifth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected using various methods including questionnaires, observations, interviews, and documentation. The analysis in this study includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the curriculum design implemented in the inclusive school uses a modification and individualization approach, tailored to the needs of students with special needs (ABK). The teachers' understanding of the inclusive curriculum is considered good, enabling them to implement more inclusive and effective teaching. The conclusion of the research is that the curriculum designs most commonly used in elementary schools are the modification and individualization curricula, which need to be understood by teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a system in which all students with special needs are accepted in regular schools located in their residential areas and receive various supportive services and education according to their needs. As emphasized in the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education Circular No. 380 of 2003, inclusive education is an educational system that includes children with special needs to learn together with other normal children (Rumia & Simorangkir, 2021). In inclusive education, children with special needs do not receive special treatment or privileges, but have the same rights and obligations as other students in the class (Rokhim et al., 2021).

According to the Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009, inclusive education is a system that provides opportunities for all students with disabilities and those with special intelligence and/or talents to follow education or learning in an educational environment together with other students. Sapon-Shevin in O'Neil, 1994 explains that inclusive education is an

educational service system that requires children with special needs to study at the nearest schools in regular classrooms with their peers (Tegtmejer, 2022). A school that provides inclusive education is a school that accommodates all students in the same class. This school provides a suitable, challenging educational program but is tailored to the abilities and needs of each student, as well as support and assistance from teachers to ensure the success of the students (McIntyre Miller & Abdou, 2018). The concept of inclusive education illustrates a service that includes children with special needs (ABK) learning together with their peers in regular schools nearest to their homes. The implementation of inclusive education encourages the provision of as wide an opportunity or access as possible for all children to receive quality education tailored to the individual needs of each student without discrimination (Amelia et al., 2022; Krithi & Pai, 2021).

There are several reasons why inclusive education should be implemented, including: all children have the same right to receive quality education that is non-discriminatory, all children have the ability to follow lessons regardless of their disabilities, differences serve to enhance the quality of learning for all children, and schools and teachers have the ability to respond to different learning needs (Dewi et al., 2020). The positive aspects of implementing inclusive education include: raising awareness and building consensus about the importance of inclusive education while eliminating discriminatory values and attitudes, involving and empowering the community to analyze the local education situation, providing opportunities for children, and identifying the reasons why some children are not attending school (for those who have not or do not attend school) (Movahedazarhouligh, 2021).

Although inclusive schools continue to make improvements in various aspects, ideally, inclusive schools are ideal for both children with and without special needs. The environment created supports children with special needs, allowing them to learn from spontaneous interactions with their peers, especially in social and emotional aspects (Muhajir, 2022). Meanwhile, for children without special needs, it provides them with opportunities to learn empathy, helpfulness, and concern. Furthermore, there is evidence that children without special needs can achieve good academic results without feeling disturbed in any way (Abramenka-Lachheb & De Siqueira, 2022). The implementation of the inclusive school system is one of the requirements that must be fulfilled to build an inclusive society, a society that respects and upholds the values of diversity as a reality of life (Walker & Musti-Rao, 2016). Several issues have emerged related to the implementation of inclusive education, such as the lack of supporting facilities for the inclusive education system and the limited knowledge and skills of teachers in inclusive schools, indicating that the inclusive education system has not been well prepared (Rasmitadila et al., 2022).

Inclusive education for children with special needs should create a learning environment that is welcoming and conducive to learning, allowing all students to learn comfortably and enjoyably. Organizing an inclusive school is not as simple as running a regular school (Robiyansah et al., 2020). The reality on the ground is that the characteristics of children with special needs admitted to inclusive schools do not always align with the policy, such as the acceptance of specific disabilities, the intelligence level being below average, and the lack of clarity in determining the number of students admitted, as well as the absence of special facilities and infrastructure. Support from the parents of children with special needs, parents of regular students, and the community is currently limited to moral support (Yusuf et al., 2018). In fact, the support needed should include material assistance and direct involvement in the implementation of inclusive education. Government support, both at the central and regional levels, is uneven across areas and remains limited, both in terms of technical assistance (such as involvement in implementation, monitoring, guidance, and evaluation of inclusive education) and non-technical support (funding and equipment) (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020).

In order to deepen the understanding of inclusive education practices in elementary schools, this study seeks to explore how curriculum design and teaching strategies are adapted to address the diverse needs of students. The objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the types of curriculum modifications applied in inclusive elementary schools,

particularly in relation to learning materials and teaching methods for students with special needs.

2. To examine how individualization approaches are implemented in inclusive curriculum design, focusing on the personalization of learning according to students' abilities and uniqueness.
3. To analyze teachers' understanding and application of inclusive curriculum principles in adapting classroom practices to accommodate diverse learners.

METHOD

The type of research used in this study is qualitative case study research. Case study research is an approach that enables researchers to investigate a phenomenon using diverse data sources (Chowdhury & Shil, 2021). This qualitative case study aims to analyze learning difficulties among students at Madani Elementary School in Cilegon, Peradaban Elementary School in Serang, and Sumber Agung Elementary School.

This research was conducted at Madani Elementary School in Cilegon, Peradaban Elementary School in Serang, and Sumber Agung Elementary School, which were selected because they serve as piloting schools for inclusive education in their respective regions. The subjects of this study consisted of 2 teachers, 1 principal, and 4 fifth-grade students from each school, making a total of 21 participants. The participants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) Teachers: having at least two years of teaching experience, residing in Serang City or Cilegon City, and willing to participate in the study; (2) Principals: actively serving in the selected inclusive piloting schools and willing to participate; and (3) Students: fifth-grade students who voluntarily agreed to be involved in the research. In terms of research ethics, this study received approval from the respective schools after a formal request was submitted to each principal. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, assured of the confidentiality of their identities, and gave their informed consent to take part in the study.

In the process of qualitative data analysis, the data is presented in the form of words rather than numbers. Data was collected through various methods including questionnaires, observations, interviews, and documentation. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data validation was carried out using triangulation, which involved cross-checking information from different sources and techniques to strengthen the accuracy and consistency of the results.

The analysis process includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data into a more systematic form to focus on the most relevant aspects of the study. Data presentation involves organizing the information into structured descriptions, matrices, or narratives to facilitate understanding and interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing is the stage where patterns, relationships, and meanings are identified, leading to findings that answer the research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on interviews conducted at Madani Elementary School in Cilegon, which is registered as an inclusive school using the 2013 curriculum and the Individual Learning Program (ILP), it was found that the Inclusive Learning Program follows the 2013 curriculum, but with adjusted grading. For example, in mathematics, if students cannot understand tens, the teacher will lower the numbers. For instance, if students cannot achieve the learning objectives with 20-5, the teacher will reduce the numbers being taught to 5-1. One of the classroom teachers explained,

"In teaching mathematics, I always try to simplify the tasks for students with special needs. For example, instead of forcing them to work with subtraction involving tens, I reduce the numbers

so that they can work with single digits first. This way, they don't feel left behind, and they can still achieve the objective at their own level. It is important for me that they feel successful in learning."

The implementation of the 2013 curriculum is adjusted based on each class teacher, but the Individual Learning Program (ILP) is tailored by the supporting teacher for each student. This is because the 2013 curriculum is intended for regular students. The ILP is designed by the supporting teacher based on the abilities of students with special needs (ABK). In the learning process, there is no differentiation between regular and ABK students, but when there are tasks for ABK students, they are separated and taught by the supporting teacher. As one of the supporting teachers stated,

"We try not to separate children with special needs from their peers because social interaction is also part of learning. However, when it comes to specific assignments that are too difficult for them, I take them aside and provide individual guidance. For example, I adapt the assignments into smaller, more manageable steps. This approach helps them to stay motivated and feel included while still working at their own pace."

The teachers' understanding of the curriculum design specifically for inclusive education at Madani Elementary School in Cilegon shows a positive direction. The majority of the teachers participating in this study understand that the inclusive curriculum is designed to accommodate the learning needs of all students, including those with special needs. The research findings show that most teachers have a good understanding of the principles and structure of the inclusive curriculum, although there are still some teachers with varying levels of understanding. In general, teachers at Madani Elementary School understand that the inclusive curriculum emphasizes learning differentiation, flexibility of materials, and adjustments in methods so that every student can achieve the expected competencies according to their abilities. These findings also indicate that the teachers show a positive attitude towards the implementation of the inclusive curriculum and are committed to implementing it effectively in the classroom.

Furthermore, the curriculum design used at Sumber Agung Elementary School consists of two curricula: the independent curriculum and the 2013 curriculum. Both are applied and supplemented with modifications while still using the independent curriculum and the 2013 curriculum. The curriculum implementation at Sumber Agung Elementary School merges regular and special needs students, so teachers must be skillful in delivering lessons. It is more challenging at Sumber Agung Elementary School because inclusive schools should receive assistance from Special Education Teachers (GPK) and Special Education Schools (SLB), with at least 2-3 special education teachers in each class. A teacher from Sumber Agung explained,

"In practice, it is very challenging for us because we teach both regular students and students with special needs together in one classroom. Ideally, we need at least two or three special education teachers in every class to support us, but currently the number is very limited. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed, but we keep trying to modify the lessons and use different strategies so that every child, whether regular or special needs, can benefit from the learning process."



Figure 1. The modified curriculum enables students with special needs to learn alongside regular students.

The class teacher explained that the actual learning material is presented to both regular and inclusive students, but guidance is necessary. Therefore, a special education teacher is required. Based on the teacher's experience in the classroom, there are 5-6 inclusive students in the class, and 1 ABK, making the teacher's task more demanding. In class 5 at Sumber Agung Elementary School, the class is divided due to inclusive students. Thus, more effort is required in the learning process, necessitating the presence of a special education teacher.

The class teacher in grade 5 at Sumber Agung Elementary School typically teaches using a whiteboard, dividing the board into two sections: one for regular students and one for ABK students. The class still follows the 2013 curriculum or the independent curriculum. For example, the topic is about heat, while for inclusive students, the topic is different, such as literacy and numeracy (calistung).

The class teacher's understanding of the curriculum design for inclusive students at Sumber Agung Elementary School is fundamentally good. The teacher understands that the inclusive curriculum should be designed to accommodate the learning needs of all students, including students with special needs (ABK), through a flexible and adaptive approach. However, challenges arise in practice due to the lack of special education teachers (GPK). The teachers recognize that the inclusive curriculum requires adjustments to materials, methods, and teaching strategies according to the characteristics of the students, including the emotional and physical needs of ABK. In practice, without support from professional assistants, the learning process becomes less optimal. For example, when the teacher is explaining the topic of heat, disruptions can occur due to ABK students experiencing fatigue or discomfort, which can affect the focus of the whole class. This shows that while the teachers understand the curriculum, its implementation requires structural support, including the presence of teaching assistants, for the inclusive curriculum to be effectively carried out.

During classroom observation, it was found that when the teacher divided the whiteboard into two sections, regular students often finished their tasks faster and waited for further instructions, while ABK students required repeated explanations and additional time to complete basic literacy tasks. The classroom atmosphere became slightly noisy when ABK students lost focus, leading the teacher to pause the main lesson to provide individual attention. Furthermore, it was observed that ABK students responded better when visual aids such as pictures and flashcards were used, compared to only verbal explanations. This condition highlighted the teacher's difficulty in balancing instructional time for both groups without external assistance.



Figure 1. Teacher paying attention to the needs of students with special needs (ABK)

Based on the research findings, SD Peradaban Cilegon uses a modified K13 curriculum design tailored to the characteristics of the school, ensuring no distinction is made between students with special needs (ABK) and non-ABK students, both in terms of learning and activities. The approach

emphasizes real-world learning experiences. For example, when introducing the topic of weather, students are taken on a field trip to the Meteorological, Climatological, and Geophysical Agency (BMKG). By visiting in person, students can better understand the material.

Teachers perceive that the theme of the curriculum for ABK students is the same as that for non-ABK students; however, the grade level is adjusted according to their abilities. For example, in a theme about dreams, normal students should be able to tell a story about their aspirations, while for ABK students, simply stating or expressing their dreams is already considered good. Therefore, the learning for ABK students is simplified, but the discussion is the same as for non-ABK students. The K13 curriculum used at SD Peradaban Cilegon is effective, and the modified curriculum implemented there is designed for all students, both ABK and non-ABK, with the same goals but with grade adjustments according to the abilities of ABK students.

Table 1. Recap of Teacher Questionnaire Results on Understanding the Curriculum Design

No.	Statement	Madani School	Peradaban School	Sumber Agung School	Comparison Result
1	I understand the principles of differentiation in the curriculum for students with special needs (ABK)	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Madani and Sumber Agung scored higher consistency compared to Peradaban.
2	I am able to prepare lesson plans (RPP) by adjusting to the needs of students with special needs (ABK)	Good	Good	Very Good	Sumber Agung shows stronger ability in preparing differentiated lesson plans.
3	I know the differences in the integrative thematic approach in the K13 curriculum	Good	Very Good	Good	Peradaban demonstrates deeper understanding compared to Madani & Sumber Agung
4	I understand how to modify the curriculum according to the students' abilities	Good	Very Good	Good	Peradaban excels in curriculum modification for diverse student abilities.
5	I know how to adjust learning outcomes for students with special needs (ABK)	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Madani & Peradaban are more consistent in adjusting learning outcomes than Sumber Agung.

Table 2. Score Categories and Interpretation

Score Range	Category
140 – 175	Very Good
105 – 139	Good
70 – 104	Satisfactory
35 – 69	Poor
<35	Very Poor

Overall, the survey results from 35 teachers show that the teachers' understanding of the inclusive curriculum design is classified as good, with two indicators falling into the "very good"

category and the other three in the "good" category. This indicates that the majority of teachers understand how to prepare, modify, and implement the curriculum inclusively according to the characteristics of the students in their classrooms.

Discussion

Based on the research findings, the curriculum design used is a modified curriculum and individualized curriculum design. Modified curriculum in the context of inclusive schools refers to adjustments made to the content, teaching strategies, or assessment methods to meet the needs of students with various abilities, including students with special needs (ABK). This curriculum does not change the basic learning material taught to all students, but it makes certain modifications to facilitate ABK students to participate in learning in a way that is more suitable for their abilities and potential (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2018).

The modified curriculum in inclusive schools is implemented by simplifying the material, adjusting assessments, providing alternative learning materials, and using technology to support ABK students' learning. Simplifying the material involves selecting topics that are easier for students with special needs to understand, without reducing the essence of the learning (Rasmitadila et al., 2022). Assessment adjustments are made to align with students' abilities, for example, by offering multiple-choice exams or practical assignments, as well as adjusting the time for completing tasks. More accessible learning materials, such as larger text or the use of technology, are provided for students with physical or cognitive limitations. Additionally, technology is used to support ABK students in understanding the material, for example, with learning applications or communication aids.

According to Mugambi (2017), curriculum differentiation and modification should be carried out based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles, ensuring that all learners can access the core content meaningfully. Shalbayeva et al. (2021) emphasize the principle of *inclusive pedagogy*, which highlights the importance of designing learning opportunities that value diversity and reject the idea of fixed ability. Furthermore, Fitri (2022) argue that curriculum modification for students with special needs must balance between access to the general curriculum and individualized supports, making learning both attainable and equitable.

Meanwhile, individualized curriculum in inclusive schools emphasizes adjusting learning according to each student's needs, pace, and learning style, where teachers design more personalized learning experiences and provide more individual support for students with special needs, such as tailored tasks and individualized assessments (Johnstone et al., 2018). The individualized curriculum in inclusive schools aims to provide a more personalized learning experience for each student, considering that each individual has different needs, abilities, and learning styles. Individualized curriculum ensures that students receive learning materials that match their level of understanding, learning pace, and learning style. Teachers design learning experiences that are more flexible and responsive to each student's needs (Rokhim et al., 2021). For example, for students who need extra support, teachers can provide simpler tasks or give instructions in a more understandable format, while for students who learn faster, teachers can provide higher challenges or more in-depth material. By implementing an individualized curriculum, each student is given the opportunity to learn in the way that best suits their needs, whether through adjustments in teaching methods, the use of learning technologies, or providing more flexible time to complete tasks (Krithi & Pai, 2021). This allows students from various backgrounds and needs, including those with special needs, to actively participate in the learning process and reach their full potential.

Based on the research findings, it was found that teachers have a good understanding of inclusive curriculum design. Teachers' understanding of inclusive curriculum design plays a crucial role in the success of implementing inclusive learning in schools. Teachers who have a good understanding of inclusive curriculum design will be able to adjust the material, methods, and teaching strategies according to the diverse needs of students, including students with special

needs (ABK) (Muhajir, 2022). A good inclusive curriculum not only provides equal access to education for all students but also ensures that each student receives the support they need to learn optimally. Teachers who understand inclusive curriculum design will be better able to adapt learning in ways that consider individual differences, such as differences in academic ability, learning pace, learning style, as well as emotional and social needs. This enables teachers to design more inclusive and effective learning experiences, as well as enhance student participation in learning (Dewi et al., 2020; Movahedazarhouli, 2021).

Curriculum design must be well understood by all teachers in the context of inclusion because it will guide educators in integrating various students, both those with special needs and those without, into the same classroom. A deep understanding of inclusive curriculum also allows teachers to modify and adapt learning materials according to the needs of each student (Abramenka-Lachheb & De Siqueira, 2022). A good curriculum design should include flexibility in adjusting content, time, and assessment methods that are accessible to all students. Therefore, the curriculum must be understood by teachers so that they can implement different approaches according to students' characteristics, creating a more responsive learning environment that supports diversity in the classroom (Walker & Musti-Rao, 2016). This understanding is crucial because without a good understanding, the inclusive curriculum may become less effective and fail to meet the needs of all students, especially those with special needs (Johnstone et al., 2018).

The implementation of inclusive curriculum design in elementary schools still faces several challenges, such as the limited competence of teachers in differentiating instruction, lack of specialized learning resources, and insufficient collaboration among stakeholders. Many teachers in inclusive schools have not received adequate training on how to modify lesson plans, assessments, and classroom management to effectively accommodate students with special needs. Furthermore, the availability of learning materials and technological tools is often inadequate, creating gaps in accessibility for ABK students. To address these issues, schools need to strengthen continuous professional development programs for teachers, provide sufficient and accessible learning resources, and build strong collaboration between teachers, parents, special education experts, and policymakers. Establishing support systems such as mentoring by special education professionals and integrating assistive technologies can also serve as practical solutions to ensure the inclusive curriculum is effectively implemented.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the curriculum design applied in inclusive schools generally adopts both modification and individualization approaches. The modification approach is reflected in the adjustment of materials and teaching methods to meet the learning needs of students with special needs, while the individualization approach emphasizes personalized instruction tailored to each student's abilities and uniqueness. Teachers' understanding of inclusive curriculum principles is relatively good, as they are able to adapt the curriculum and implement more inclusive learning practices in the classroom. The scientific contribution of this study lies in providing empirical evidence on how inclusive curriculum design is operationalized in elementary schools, especially through the dual application of modification and individualization strategies. This research enriches the discourse on inclusive education by highlighting practical implications for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers in designing more responsive curricula. Furthermore, the findings imply that strengthening teacher capacity and providing systematic support mechanisms are critical for sustaining inclusive practices, which can serve as a reference for further studies and policy formulation in inclusive education.

The limitations of this study include the small number of participants, which only involved a few teachers in inclusive schools, making the findings less representative of the broader population of inclusive school teachers. Moreover, the study did not explore in depth the concrete challenges teachers face in implementing modified and individualized curriculum designs. Recommendations for future research include expanding the sample size to involve a larger and

more diverse group of teachers from different inclusive schools, as well as conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of inclusive curriculum implementation on the development of students with special needs. In addition, future studies should emphasize the need for more comprehensive teacher training programs that focus not only on pedagogical strategies but also on classroom management, differentiation techniques, and the use of assistive technologies. Stronger policy support from educational authorities is also necessary, particularly in providing clear guidelines, adequate funding, and professional development opportunities to strengthen inclusive practices. Furthermore, curriculum development efforts should integrate flexibility and adaptability, ensuring that inclusive principles are embedded systematically while still aligning with national education standards.

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