

The Role of School Management Teams in Developing an Inclusive Education Culture in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the role of school management teams (SMTs) in fostering an inclusive education culture at a public secondary school in Bekasi City, Indonesia. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the study examines how SMTs plan, implement, and evaluate inclusive practices. Findings indicate that SMTs are pivotal in policy formulation, teacher capacity building, stakeholder collaboration, and resource mobilization. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and societal stigma persist. The study concludes that effective leadership, strategic planning, and community engagement are essential for sustainable inclusive education.

Keywords: inclusive education, school management teams, secondary schools

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become an international standard to ensure the rights of every child to receive quality education regardless of physical, intellectual, emotional, or social differences (UNESCO, 2020). In Indonesia, the push for inclusive education is supported by Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System and Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 70/2009, encouraging mainstream schools to accommodate students with special needs.

School Management Teams (SMTs), including principals, vice principals, and program coordinators, play a strategic role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. They not only shape school policies but also influence teaching culture and community involvement. This study focuses on how SMTs at SMAN 1 Bekasi contribute to building an inclusive education culture.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative case study approach was used, as it allows for an in-depth examination of complex processes within a real-life context (Yin, 2018).

2.2 Participants

Participants were selected purposively and included:

- 1 School Principal
- 2 Vice Principals (Curriculum and Student Affairs)
- 1 Inclusive Education Coordinator
- 5 Regular Teachers
- 3 Special Education Teachers

- 4 Parents of students with special needs

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through:

- **Interviews** with SMT members, teachers, and parents
- **Classroom observations** of inclusive practices
- **Document analysis** of school policies, IEPs (Individualized Education Plans), and training reports

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were thematically analyzed using the six-phase framework from Braun and Clarke (2006).

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Policy Formulation and Inclusive Leadership

The principal took initiative in formulating inclusive policies that reflect both national guidelines and local context. One senior teacher shared:

“Inclusive values are embedded in our mission. It starts with the principal’s commitment.”

This aligns with Ainscow and Sandill’s (2010) emphasis on the importance of leadership in building inclusive cultures.

3.2 Teacher Capacity Building

Workshops on inclusive pedagogy and differentiated instruction were held every semester. However, several teachers felt the need for more practical training. A science teacher noted:

“Theory is not enough. We need real examples and support when challenges happen in the classroom.”

Ramadhan and Maryani (2023) also noted that Indonesian secondary teachers often lack sufficient pedagogical tools for inclusive practice.

3.3 Stakeholder Engagement

The SMT promoted collaboration with parents and local disability organizations. Parent-teacher meetings addressed not just academic progress but also social-emotional needs.

“We are not only informed, but truly involved,” said one parent of a student with autism.

UNESCO (2020) stresses the importance of stakeholder collaboration as a pillar of inclusive education.

3.4 Infrastructure and Resources

Some improvements were made (e.g., wheelchair ramps and quiet rooms), but resource limitations remained. The school worked with local NGOs to obtain assistive technologies and learning aids.

3.5 Barriers and Challenges

Several key issues hindered the full implementation of inclusive education:

- **Inadequate infrastructure** (no elevators, narrow hallways)
- **Limited training** for general education teachers
- **Persistent stigma** among students and some parents

These findings mirror those of Loreman (2014), who found similar systemic barriers in inclusive schools across Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that school management teams in Bekasi play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive education by setting clear policies, empowering teachers, and engaging with communities. Although progress has been made, further support is needed in terms of resources, training, and societal awareness.

Recommendations:

1. **Expand teacher training** with a focus on applied inclusive strategies
2. **Improve school infrastructure** for better accessibility
3. **Launch awareness campaigns** involving students, parents, and local communities
4. **Secure consistent funding** from government or private partners

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