



Learning Management for Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Inclusive Education Providers in West Lombok

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ABSTRACT: Inclusive education fundamentally reshapes how schools accommodate children with special needs (ABK), particularly at the critical Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level. This study aims to describe the learning management processes and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in inclusive PAUDs within West Lombok Regency. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation across key stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, parents, NGOs, and regional educational authorities. The findings indicate that the implementation of inclusive policies (Permendagri No. 70 of 2009 and Regional Regulation No. 13 of 2014) is profoundly suboptimal due to systemic barriers. Specifically, PAUDs lack standardized, specialized infrastructure and specialized guiding teachers (GPK). Learning management predominantly mirrors regular classrooms without substantial curriculum modification or individual education plans (IEP). The study identifies a severe disconnect and lack of coordination between the provincial government (perceived to hold authority) and the regency government, leading to inadequate budget allocations, absent training, and low institutional commitment. Furthermore, sociocultural stigmas and economic constraints continue to restrict educational access for ABK. The study recommends urgent policy realignment, specific budget allocation for inclusive infrastructure and GPK, and continuous community empowerment to foster genuine inclusive education.

KEYWORDS: Children with Special Needs (ABK), Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Inclusive Education, Learning Management, Policy Implementation, West Lombok

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment where learners can actively develop their potential, as mandated by the Indonesian National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003. Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is particularly crucial as it represents the "golden age" where children are most sensitive to educational stimuli. This foundational phase is vital for cognitive, motor, socio-emotional, and moral development (Santrock, 2007; Diana, 2017). However, achieving optimal development requires specialized attention, especially for children with special needs (ABK).

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Indonesia has a significant population of ABK, yet access to adequate education remains disproportionately low. While the Ministry of Education and Culture has encouraged the growth of inclusive schools to integrate ABK into regular educational settings, the reality on the ground often falls short of the philosophical and legal mandates, such as the Salamanca Statement and Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009.

Inclusive education is not merely placing ABK in regular classrooms; it requires a systemic transformation of school management, curriculum adaptation, specialized infrastructure, and trained personnel (Smith, 2014; Suparno, 2010). In West Lombok Regency, several PAUDs have been designated as inclusive providers. However, managing these classrooms presents immense challenges. Teachers often lack the necessary competencies, and there are varied perceptions regarding the inclusion concept among educators, parents, and policymakers.

This study aims to evaluate the learning management for ABK in inclusive PAUDs in West Lombok. It focuses on the intricacies of policy implementation, identifying both the supporting mechanisms and the multifaceted barriers ranging from infrastructure deficits to socio-cultural stigma and administrative disconnects.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Learning Management and Inclusive Education

Management in education involves planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating resources to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently (Hamalik, 2008). In the context of inclusive education, management extends to creating a conducive classroom climate that accommodates diverse learning needs (Marthan, 2007). This includes modifying the regular curriculum to suit individual capabilities and employing specialized teaching strategies and media (Kustawan, 2016).

2.2 Policy Implementation Theory

To analyze the efficacy of inclusive education in West Lombok, this research employs Mazmanian and Sabatier's policy implementation theory. This framework posits that implementation success is influenced by three variables:

(1) the characteristics of the problem (e.g., infrastructure, accessibility, and human resources); (2) the characteristics of the policy itself (e.g., budget allocation, institutional support, and rule clarity); and (3) environmental variables (e.g., socio-economic and cultural factors).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. The study was conducted in West Lombok Regency, focusing on PAUDs designated as inclusive education providers (e.g., TK Lenterahati Islamic Boarding School, TK Lombok Care Foundation, TK Pembina 1 Narmada, and TK Pembina 1 Gerung).

Data were collected through purposive sampling involving key informants: regional parliamentary members (DPRD), local education agency officials, school principals, teachers, parents of ABK, and NGO representatives. The data collection included unstandardized in-depth interviews, non-participant observation of classroom management, and documentation analysis. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation. The analysis followed Prasetya Irawan's qualitative model: raw data collection, transcription, coding, categorization, provisional conclusions, triangulation, and final conclusion drawing.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Characteristics of the Problem

The study reveals significant hurdles in the daily management of inclusive PAUDs. Firstly, there is a distinct lack of standardized infrastructure and specialized facilities for ABK. Most observed schools utilize standard equipment, placing ABK at a disadvantage. Financial constraints and a lack of governmental aid are the primary reasons cited by school principals for this deficiency.

Secondly, human resources are critically insufficient. There is a glaring absence of Special Guiding Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus - GPK) in public inclusive schools due to budget limitations. Consequently, regular teachers, who often lack specific special education training, are overwhelmed by the dual responsibility of managing regular students and ABK. Accessibility is also a major issue, as many regular schools refuse to accept ABK, leading to a concentration of these students in a few designated inclusive schools, thereby straining their already limited resources.

4.2 Characteristics of the Policy

The implementation is severely hampered by policy ambiguity and jurisdictional evasion. The West Lombok Regency government largely perceives inclusive education and special schools as the domain of the provincial government (Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat). This has resulted in a virtually non-existent budget allocation for inclusive PAUDs at the regency level.

Coordination between the provincial government, regency government, and the schools is minimal. Training programs for teachers are sporadic and lack continuity or subsequent evaluation. The bureaucratic complexity involved in applying for financial aid further discourages schools from seeking necessary funds.

4.3 Environmental Variables

Environmental factors significantly impede inclusive education. Socio-culturally, there remains a pervasive stigma regarding disability. ABK are often viewed as minorities requiring pity rather than equitable educational rights, leading to marginalization. Economically, parents of ABK from lower-income backgrounds struggle to access quality education, as public schools refuse them and private inclusive schools (which may charge fees for specialized care) are unaffordable.

5. CONCLUSION

The management of inclusive learning for children with special needs in West Lombok's PAUDs is fundamentally constrained. The implementation of inclusive education policies is hindered by inadequate infrastructure, a severe lack of specialized teaching staff (GPK), and profound administrative disengagement from the regency government, which incorrectly defers all responsibility to the provincial level.

To realize the true spirit of inclusive education, it is imperative that the West Lombok Regency government assumes active responsibility. This requires allocating specific budgets for inclusive infrastructure and GPK salaries, establishing at least one fully equipped inclusive school per sub-district to prevent student concentration, and fostering continuous, structured training for educators. Furthermore, comprehensive societal campaigns are necessary to dismantle cultural stigmas and promote genuine inclusivity.

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