



The Effectiveness of the Learning Service Management Strategy for Students with Autism in an Inclusive Elementary School

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Submitted/Received 4 August 2023; First Revised 7 August 2023; Accepted 10 July 2024

First Available Online 1 June 2025; Publication Date 1 June 2025

Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of a learning service management strategy for children with autism in an inclusive elementary school. This study employed a case study as its research methodology, collecting data through interviews, observation, and documentation. The study results suggest that Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School effectively manages its services by implementing a curriculum that is modified or tailored to the specific needs of children with special needs. Additionally, the school conducted assessments to inform the planning of learning activities for students with autism. When creating Individualized Learning Plans, teachers employed various learning methods to accommodate students classified as having special needs. Additionally, the assessment process was tailored to the student's abilities based on the assessment outcomes. The school offered a diverse range of services to ensure that they could provide the best possible support for all students. In conclusion, in managing educational services, the principal and teachers strive to work cooperatively to plan, execute, and evaluate school-related activities effectively.

Keywords: service management, autism, inclusive elementary school.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is the embodiment of a friendly existence without discrimination in all aspects of community life. Thus, inclusiveness is not limited to the realm of education; it is present in every aspect of life (Hidayat et al., 2019). Furthermore, inclusiveness includes an aspiration for a life that is both equitable and prosperous, as well as prosperity that must be attained in a social context (Sumardi & Mulyadi, 2019). Inclusive education is a philosophy that aims to establish friendly schools. These schools are characterized by the following: (1) respect for fundamental human rights, (2) attention to individual needs, (3) acceptance of diversity, (4) nondiscrimination, and (5) the avoidance of labeling.

Inclusive education enables children with special needs to be educated alongside their peers in regular schools. Subsequently, their learning opportunities expand (Sukadari, 2020). This is stipulated in Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of

2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities and Potential for Special Intelligence and/or Talent. Article 1 states that "inclusive education is an education delivery system that provides opportunities for all students who experience disorders and have the potential for intelligence and/or special talents to attend education or learn in one educational environment together with students in general."

The abovementioned definition of inclusion demonstrates that the learning process for students with special needs is tailored to their unique characteristics and needs. Learning activities are the implementation of a modified curriculum based on assessment (Yuliandari & Hadi, 2020). Without a doubt, regular schools can modify their curriculum to accommodate the unique characteristics and requirements of students with special needs. Essentially, inclusive education integrates children with special needs into regular schools, tailoring

the curriculum to their unique needs and characteristics (Djuani et al., 2020). Inclusive education employs the following learning models: 1. Regular classes (full inclusion); (2) Regular classes with clusters; (3) Regular classes with pull-outs; (4) Regular classes with clusters and pull-outs; (5) Special classes with varied integrations; and (6) Special classes with supports.

Special Assistance Teachers (Indonesian: Guru Pendamping Khusus/GPK) are employed to create an inclusive classroom. Special assistance teachers are responsible for ensuring that the presence of students with special needs does not disrupt the educational program of other students and for developing and maintaining optimal compatibility between these students and other students (Rahayu, 2017). Special assistance teachers are individuals with special education qualifications or backgrounds responsible for organizing schools in an inclusive manner. This includes organizing prior assessment for learning planning, organizing curriculum plus enrichment or exploration of material, organizing special learning services, organizing home visits, organizing media adaptation, managing assistive devices, organizing special program development, and organizing special administration (Nurfadhillah, 2022).

Inclusive classroom management encompasses more than just physical space and time. However, it is crucial to consider the number of students with special needs in a class, as this will impact the overall quality of educational services provided (Hisbollah, 2022). The number of students with special needs in a class is not fixed but depends on their difficulties. When there are children with mild disabilities who have special needs, it is feasible to have one to five special needs learners in a single class. However, if the disabilities are severe, the class is restricted to just two learners with special needs (Sumardi & Mulyadi, 2022). Initial research reveals that Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School has implemented inclusive education since 2019. During this period, there have been a total of 4 children with special needs enrolled in grades 1 to 6. This serves as a

manifestation of the inclusive education program, aiming to provide equal education to all communities. Muhammadiyah Private Primary School offers a range of essential services to support students with special needs, including tailored curriculum, customized learning materials, and instructional resources that suit each student's unique features and needs. The school's efficient management enables the effective implementation of inclusive education by ensuring that the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes align with the relevant evaluation criteria (Natalia & Mundilarno, 2019). Effective implementation of guidance services necessitates thorough planning, robust support, and seamless collaboration among educators, principals, educational institutions, and parents (Mutia, 2021). Parents must participate in decision-making and planning processes to create inclusive classrooms (Wardani & Dwiningrum, 2021). In elementary schools, the implementation of tutoring is integrated with the overall learning process. Teachers are obligated to offer one-on-one tutoring services to autistic students while also attending to the needs of the entire class as a whole (Anggriana & Trisnani, 2016). Teachers must equip students with the necessary skills to interact with typically developing peers in their classroom. When teaching children with special needs, teachers must carefully consider and plan learning strategies, methodologies, media, material management, and evaluation (Aziz et al., 2016). Teachers have the autonomy to construct strategies based on their students' specific abilities and conditions (Mulyadi & Kresnawaty, 2020). In addition, Mulyadi and Kresnawaty (2019) proposed several learning strategies that can offer students meaningful learning strategies, including (a) expository learning strategies, (b) inquiry-based learning, and (c) cooperative learning. Given the information provided, the researchers aimed to investigate the methods employed by grade 6 teachers working with students with special needs to effectively plan, implement, evaluate, and monitor learning outcomes at

their school. The objective is to achieve the desired learning goals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach. The selection of this approach was motivated by the need to acquire a comprehensive overview and provide descriptive data in the form of verbal or written responses from participants and observable actions (Hadi, 2021). Another reason is that the qualitative approach can both integrate and comprehend the underlying significance of participant behavior, comprehend and interpret the underlying significance of participant behavior, integrate complex settings and interactions, explore to identify various types of information and integrate phenomena. The research employed the case study method.

A case study examines issues influenced by specific contexts, circumstances, and interactions with the surrounding environment (Gunawan, 2022). The primary objective of employing the case study technique is to comprehensively examine and explore a certain item or case, encompassing concepts, actions, policies, social classes, regions, organizations, and other related phenomena (Fitrah, 2018). Hence, using the case study technique is deemed applicable to the circumstances of Muhammadiyah Private Primary Schools, as this school caters to students with special needs.

The research employed the data collection observation technique, wherein researchers directly observed the field to identify issues and gather information about service management and student learning outcomes. Researchers conducted interviews with teachers, school principals, and students, utilizing question-and-response approaches as representative sources of information. Documentation serves as a valuable secondary data source to enhance research data relevant to research aims and the secondary interpretation of events. The collected data comprises non-statistical documents pertaining to the school's profile, regulations, and policies. These records serve

as the foundation for implementing the services the school offers, together with a student database. When analyzing data, researchers employed descriptive analysis, a technique used to succinctly describe or synthesize data without the intention of generalizing or drawing conclusions but rather to elucidate that specific group of data. Researchers conducted data analysis through methods such as data reduction, display, analysis, decision-making, and verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lesson planning is a projection of what is needed in order to achieve predetermined learning goals and objectives (Bararah, 2017). When designing lesson plans for children with special needs, each school implements various activities, typically involving input from the school elements. In every school, classroom planning for children with special needs typically involves integrated learning related to real conditions that generally occur in the learning process (Hernawan & Resmini, 2009). This learning approach is founded on the premise that children's development is holistic, meaning that progress in one fundamental skill will have affect other fundamental skills (Muhtadi, 2011). School planning occurs at multiple levels, including internal discussions and meetings among teachers and committees, and occasionally involving community leaders and other invited partners who provide shared services, such as student health services with the assistance of the community health center. When planning lessons, teachers must gather comprehensive data on the needs, interests, skills, and developmental levels of every student in the inclusive classroom (Azhuri et al., 2021). In an inclusive classroom, teachers must set clear and measurable learning goals encompassing each student's abilities and skills. These objectives should be attainable for every student with special needs, considering their requirements and degree of development. This may also encompass consultations with parents and using data from previous evaluations. In addition, Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School tailors its curriculum to suit its students'

specific traits and requirements. This is evident in the lesson plans created by teachers, who align the learning objectives with the student's characteristics. Furthermore, the teachers incorporate various learning components, such as methods, media, and diverse evaluation instruments. It is necessary to modify the curriculum to cater to every student's individual learning requirements (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022). Teachers must identify the curriculum's key components relevant to students' growth and abilities and then make necessary modifications, such as changing materials, employing diverse teaching methods, and conducting appropriate assessments. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of employing diverse teaching strategies to cater to the distinct learning styles and needs of students (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022). Another valuable effort is to diversify teaching methodologies by incorporating visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and experiential learning techniques to enhance students' comprehension and application of concepts. Furthermore, it is advisable to select and prepare learning resources that are easily accessible to all students. Ensure that the materials used are of an appropriate level of difficulty for students' needs and have additional support, such as concept maps, photos, or videos that provide visual explanations of ideas. Engage in collaboration with inclusion teachers, therapists, or other support professionals who provide assistance to students with special needs (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Regularly engage in communication with them to discuss strategies and modifications required for course planning and execution. Select assessment approaches appropriate for children's needs and capabilities in inclusive classrooms. Eventually, various assessment methods such as formative and summative assessment, authentic assessment, portfolios, and direct observation will be implemented to determine students' learning progress and accomplishments.

Learning activities are conducted to attain learning goals, so it is essential to adhere to certain principles in order to achieve them.

The principles of learning in inclusive classrooms are essentially identical to the concepts of learning that are applicable to students in general. However, due to the presence of students with special needs in the classroom, the teacher must also incorporate specific concepts tailored to address the specific needs or challenges these children face. Interviews and observations revealed that Muhammadiyah Private Elementary Schools prioritize learning effectiveness during the opening lessons. Teachers are expected to adhere to the principles of consistency, enthusiasm, flexibility, warmth, brevity, conciseness, and clear communication. Furthermore, to ensure an engaging session, it is insufficient to merely commence the class with salutations, introductions, and an overview of the subject matter to be instructed. According to Pramita and Muliati (2021), the key to starting a class is for the teacher to create a conducive atmosphere and capture the students' attention towards the learning objectives. In addition, Sugiarto and Rahmawati (2020) propose several components for opening lessons. These include: a) capturing students' attention by employing different teaching styles, utilizing tools, varying interaction patterns, and changing learning environments; b) fostering motivation by creating a warm and enthusiastic atmosphere, stimulating curiosity, presenting conflicting ideas, and considering students' interests; c) providing references by stating goals and task limitations, outlining steps, emphasizing the main problem, and asking apperception questions; and d) establishing connections by identifying stepping stones, exploring relationships between related aspects, introducing concepts first, and making comparisons or contrasts. Meanwhile, in the core learning activities, it is imperative for a teacher to fully comprehend and excel in the teaching materials in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process effectively. This will significantly influence the assimilation of teaching materials by both typical students and those with autism. Additionally, proficiency in understanding the material will determine the attainment of the learning objectives outlined in the lesson plan

or Individualized Learning Program during the process of educational planning. Mulyadi (2022) asserts that teachers who possess a profound understanding of teaching materials can effectively communicate the subject with clarity, precision, and organization. They have the ability to convey information in a way that is readily comprehensible to students, provide relevant examples, and establish connections between concepts and real-life situations. According to Mulyadi (2022), teachers who possess a deep understanding of teaching materials are capable of creating diverse and captivating learning materials that align with the demands of their students. Individuals can choose and personalize suitable educational materials, such as textbooks, online resources, and teaching tools, to align with specific learning goals and student attributes. In a classroom with a diverse range of students, teachers who possess a deep understanding of the teaching materials can effortlessly adapt their teaching methods, level of difficulty, and learning approaches to accommodate each student's unique needs and skills. They can provide additional explanations, relevant reading materials, or use different learning strategies to meet students' needs.

The teachers at Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School utilized various teaching approaches and strategies to teach both typical and autistic students effectively. These approaches include expository teaching, where the teacher verbally presents the material, and cooperative teaching, which promotes student interaction and allows autistic students to socialize in the classroom. Mulyadi (2022) asserts that using learning strategies aims to improve understanding, encourage active participation, and facilitate the practical application of concepts in real-world situations. Inclusive learning involves the practice of teachers organizing students into smaller groups to engage in discussions on certain subjects, as elucidated by Mulyadi (2022). This activity promotes student engagement, fosters idea sharing, and facilitates more profound comprehension by

facilitating the interchange of information and opinions.

In closing the lesson, teachers at Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School would offer a summary of the knowledge and skills that students have acquired. The teacher delivered an essential summary of the subject matter discussed during the discussion. Moreover, the teacher concluded the meeting by questioning students about the previously discussed topic. This activity aims to determine the level of comprehension among students. In addition, the teacher provided further clarification in cases where the students could not comprehend the material. The teacher provided additional social encouragement to students in order to ensure the successful completion of the session. This contact between the student and teacher can facilitate the attainment of learning objectives. Teachers can also praise their students. Mulyadi and Kresnawaty (2020) contend that the teacher must assess the student's comprehension of the material being taught at the end of the lesson to evaluate the effectiveness of learning in the classroom. Mulyadi and Anita Kresnawaty (2020) outline several factors teachers should consider when concluding a lesson. These include reviewing the lesson's main points through indicators, assessing students' comprehension through questioning, encouraging students to ask their own questions, and providing a summary.

The evaluation is conducted after the learning process to assess the success and achievement of the program that has been designed or modified. Education evaluation refers to the systematic gathering and analysis of data to assess the effectiveness and quality of educational institutions, including education managers, programs, and units, across all levels and types of education. This process serves to control, ensure, and ascertain the accountability of education implementation (Article 1 of West Java Governor Regulation No. 72 of 2013). According to results gathered from interviews and observations, Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School employs a distinct approach to assessing the educational

progress of pupils with special needs compared to their typical classmates. The assessment of children with special needs should be based on their Individual Learning Program, specifically tailored for them. Therefore, these students' evaluation criteria and passing standards will differ from the usual requirements. The basic competencies (KD) outlined in the Individual Learning Program typically employ operational verbs (KKO) that are modified or simplified in complexity. Typically, the evaluation conducted differs from that of typical children by reducing the level of difficulty. According to Mulyadi and Kresnawaty (2020), the learning assessment in children with special needs cannot be considered the same. Children with special needs face challenges that hinder their ideal learning process, necessitating adjustments to the indicators of learning completeness.

In order to enhance and optimize the performance, services, and programs schools provide for students and achieve the desired educational objectives, school members must follow up on the assessments conducted during the learning process. Private Elementary School 03 Muhammadiyah examined students' learning progress using various assessment results. This input will be used to prepare the next learning plan. The school's application of learning outcomes assessment is as follows. Firstly, the school utilizes learning outcomes assessment to improve future lesson programs or units, specifically focusing on instructional objectives, material organization, teaching and learning activities, and assessment questions. Secondly, the purpose is to evaluate and enhance instructional strategies in the selection and implementation of teaching methods. Thirdly, it is crucial to review learning materials that students may not have fully understood before moving on to new ones. Finally, a diagnosis of students' learning issues should be carried out to identify the root causes of their failure to meet learning objectives. The findings of this diagnosis can be utilized to assist and direct students in their learning process. Sugiarto and Rahmawati (2021) contend that

effectively implementing inclusive learning in the classroom requires school principals and classroom teachers to prioritize the analysis of learning evaluation outcomes. This analysis serves as a crucial foundation for enhancing service programs to support children with special needs. Sugiarto and Rahmawati (2021) stated that follow-up assessments in learning evaluations are utilized to assess the ability and learning outcomes of students with autism. This allows for the creation of learning plans that align with the developmental progress of students with disabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

The management of services provided by Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School to students with normal and special needs has been optimal. This conclusion is based on observations, documentation, and interviews with principals, teachers, and students. These services' planning, implementation, and assessment have been carefully designed based on prior assessments. The goal is to provide meaningful learning experiences to students, which in turn has a positive effect on the learning climate. Eventually, this approach contributes to achieving the national education goal of educating the nation's life. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah Private Elementary School has the potential to serve as a pilot school in the implementation of inclusive education for neighboring schools, contributing to the realization of the West Java provincial goal of becoming an inclusive province.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their gratitude to several parties that contributed to this research, including participants who willingly participated in interviews and schools that willingly allowed this research to take place. The authors would like to extend heartfelt thanks to Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia for their assistance.

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