



The Role of Teachers in Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment in Elementary Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the role of teachers in creating an inclusive learning environment in elementary schools. The study used a literature review method by analyzing various journals and scientific articles related to inclusive education. The results indicate that teachers play a crucial role in creating a learning environment that embraces student diversity, provides equitable learning, and fosters positive social interactions in the classroom. Teachers are also required to possess social and pedagogical competencies and the ability to adapt to student needs. However, several challenges remain, such as a lack of understanding of inclusive education and limited school facilities. Therefore, training and support from various parties are needed to ensure the success of inclusive learning.

Keywords: Teachers, Inclusive Education, Learning Environment, Elementary Schools.

Introduction

Inclusive education is now a primary approach in the global education system, fulfilling every child's right to a quality education without discrimination. In Indonesia, this commitment is reinforced through Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009, which emphasizes that every educational unit must be able to provide services for students with special needs. Elementary school teachers play a crucial role in this regard, as they directly address the diverse needs of students in the classroom.

However, the implementation of inclusive education at the elementary school level still faces various challenges, particularly related to teacher readiness and competency. Several studies have shown that although teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion, many lack adequate knowledge and skills ([Avramidis & Norwich, 2002](#)). Structured training and hands-on experience have been shown to improve teacher readiness for teaching in inclusive classrooms ([Sharma et al., 2008](#)). In Indonesia, teachers still struggle to design effective learning strategies for students with special needs ([Efendi, 2018](#)).

According to Achmad Haikal Kurniawan (2026), teachers play several important roles in inclusive education. 1) Teachers need to adapt the curriculum so that learning can

be tailored to the needs and abilities of each student, including by implementing diverse teaching and assessment methods. 2) Teachers must be able to manage inclusive classrooms by creating a supportive learning environment for all students through fair rules, collaboration between students, and appropriate conflict management.

3) Teachers are also required to understand student needs, particularly in recognizing the special needs of each individual through effective communication with students, parents, and relevant parties. 4) Teachers need to participate in training and professional development to continuously improve their knowledge and skills in implementing inclusive education, enabling them to face various challenges in the classroom.

Furthermore, the role of teachers in inclusive education has not been comprehensively studied, especially those that integrate findings from national and international research. Yet, teachers are required not only to be able to manage heterogeneous classes but also to develop adaptive and responsive learning approaches to student needs. An inclusive pedagogical approach has proven effective in helping integrate students with special needs into regular classrooms ([Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011](#)).

In Indonesia, other challenges faced by teachers include limited training and resources, as well as a lack of collaboration with special education teachers ([Susanto & Sari, 2020](#)). Furthermore, the implementation of learning strategies is often not evidence-based and does not optimally address the diverse needs of students ([Yuliyanti, 2021](#)). This indicates a gap between understanding the concept of inclusion and practice in the field ([Subari & Wahyuni, 2022](#)).

To support the success of inclusive education, teachers need to understand approaches such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which emphasizes flexibility in the learning process ([Katz, 2013](#)). However, its implementation in Indonesia remains uneven. Furthermore, support from the school environment and policies also influence teacher confidence and effectiveness in teaching in inclusive classrooms ([Malinen et al., 2013](#)).

Based on this, this article aims to compile a literature review on the role of elementary school teachers in inclusive learning based on pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. Furthermore, this research seeks to identify key findings from various studies and develop a conceptual framework that can serve as a basis for policy development and teacher training in inclusive education in Indonesia.

An inclusive learning environment also needs to be supported by an approach that is responsive to student needs and the integration of multicultural values into learning. Challenges such as cultural differences, language differences, and social stereotypes need to be addressed through flexible learning strategies and collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community. Thus, inclusive education not only creates equal learning opportunities but also fosters mutual respect and tolerance among students.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach with library research to analyze the role of teachers in creating an inclusive learning environment in elementary schools. This approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of inclusive education through various relevant literature sources. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative research allows researchers to understand a social phenomenon through interpretation of existing data and context.

Data collection techniques were conducted by reviewing various scientific sources, such as national and international journals, books, research articles, and educational policy documents related to inclusive education and teacher competency. The literature used was selected based on its relevance, scientific quality, and relevance to the research focus. The analysis process was conducted using thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes related to pedagogical, social, and professional competencies, as well as inclusive learning strategies.

Result and Discussion

The Role of Teachers in Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

Studies show that teachers play a central role in creating an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs. Teachers function not only as transmitters of learning materials, but also as facilitators, mediators, motivators, and guides for all students. In inclusive education, teachers are required to create a learning environment that respects diversity and provides equal learning opportunities to all students without discrimination. Teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that all students feel safe, accepted, and valued in the school environment.

According to Amalia and Amelia (2025), teachers who implement inclusive learning strategies are able to increase the engagement of students with special needs in the learning process. These strategies include the use of flexible learning media, adjustments to teaching methods, the development of individual learning programs, and strengthening a classroom culture that values differences. Teachers who understand the characteristics of students with special needs will more easily adapt learning to their needs and abilities, resulting in a more effective learning process.

Furthermore, teachers also play a role in building a positive classroom culture. An inclusive learning environment is determined not only by teaching methods but also by the teacher's attitude towards students. Teachers who are empathetic, patient, and open to diversity are able to create a comfortable learning environment and support students' social-emotional development. Previous research has shown that teachers need to understand and appreciate student diversity and respond to their needs with learning strategies that are accessible to all learners.

Differentiation Strategies in Inclusive Learning

One of the main strategies implemented by teachers in inclusive education is differentiated learning. This strategy involves adapting materials, methods, media, and

assessment formats to suit the abilities and needs of each student. In inclusive classrooms, teachers encounter students with diverse academic abilities, characteristics, and needs, necessitating a flexible and adaptive learning approach.

Tomlinson (2017) explains that differentiated learning is an approach designed to meet the diverse learning needs of students by adapting content, processes, products, and the learning environment. In practice, teachers can use various learning methods such as visual media, audio, educational games, and hands-on practice to help students understand the material more easily.

Studies have shown that implementing differentiated learning can increase the participation and learning motivation of students with special needs. Students feel more confident because they have the opportunity to learn according to their abilities. Teachers also vary the assignments between regular and special needs students without compromising the primary learning objectives. This strategy ensures students don't feel left behind and are more actively engaged in the learning process.

Furthermore, the use of adaptive learning media is also an important part of the differentiation strategy. Teachers can use images, videos, visual aids, and learning technology to help students understand the material more concretely. The use of varied media is considered effective in increasing the focus and learning interest of students with special needs. Previous research also shows that the use of information technology in learning can increase student engagement in inclusive classrooms.

The Role of Teacher Communication in Increasing Learning Engagement

Good communication between teachers and students is a crucial factor in creating a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment. Teachers who use open and empathetic communication are able to build positive relationships with students. This relationship makes students more confident in asking questions, discussing, and expressing their opinions.

Fitrianti and Hidayati (2025) explain that two-way communication can increase student engagement because students feel valued and involved in the learning process. Teachers who provide praise, motivation, and positive feedback can increase students' enthusiasm for learning.

In addition to verbal communication, nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, eye contact, and body language also significantly influences student comfort in the classroom. Teachers who demonstrate a friendly and enthusiastic attitude can create a more conducive learning environment.

School Environment and Parental Support

The success of inclusive education depends not only on teacher competence but also requires support from the school environment and families. Schools need to provide facilities that are friendly to students with special needs, such as accessible classrooms, adaptive learning media, and a safe and comfortable learning environment. In addition to school support, parental involvement also has a significant impact on the academic and

socio-emotional development of students with special needs. Parents can collaborate with teachers to monitor their children's learning progress and provide emotional support at home. Harahap, Amelia, and Azis (2025) stated that synergy between schools, families, and the community is a crucial factor in creating effective inclusive education.

Collaboration between teachers, parents, and professionals is also necessary to address the needs of students with special needs. Teachers can discuss their children's development with parents and determine appropriate learning strategies. Previous research has shown that open communication between teachers and parents can help teachers better understand students' needs, making interventions more effective.

Obstacles to Implementing Inclusive Education

Although inclusive education has many benefits, its implementation still faces various challenges. One major obstacle is the lack of teacher competency in handling students with special needs. Many teachers have not received adequate training in inclusive learning strategies, making them difficult to manage heterogeneous classes.

Furthermore, limited school facilities also pose a barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. Many schools lack adaptive learning media, accessible learning spaces, or adequate specialized support staff. Boa, Moma, and Awe (2026) revealed that classroom teachers often experience a double workload, having to assist students with special needs while still meeting curriculum targets.

Other research also indicates that a lack of institutional support and inadequate teacher training are key challenges in inclusive education. Teachers often feel unprepared to address the diversity of student needs, resulting in suboptimal learning quality.

Therefore, improving teacher competency through ongoing training, providing supporting facilities, and adopting more flexible school policies is necessary. The government and schools also need to increase support for the implementation of inclusive education so that all students receive equal and quality learning opportunities.

Conclusion

This study underscores that the strategic role of elementary school teachers extends beyond academic instruction, with adaptive pedagogical and personal competencies serving as the primary determinants of a safe and responsive inclusive ecosystem. The implications of these findings suggest that the success of inclusive education cannot rely in isolation on teacher readiness within the classroom; rather, it necessitates a systemic paradigm shift that integrates school policies, accessible facilities, and robust cross-sector collaboration. As a practical recommendation, schools and policymakers should prioritize sustainable professional development focused on differentiated instruction strategies and the provision of specialized educational support staff to bridge implementation gaps in the field. For future research, it is suggested to explore the effectiveness of specific partnership models between schools and parents in supporting the socio-emotional development of students with special needs, as well as to analyze the impact of assistive technology on teacher workload efficiency in managing heterogeneous inclusive classrooms.

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