

Strategies for Successful Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia: A Review

Strategi untuk Kesuksesan Implementasi Pendidikan Inklusif di Indonesia: Sebuah Reviu

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Abstract

Inclusive education has emerged as one of the most successful approaches to meeting the educational needs of students with special educational needs (SEN). However, the implementation of inclusive education still faces several challenges. This review aims to address these challenges and identify effective strategies for successfully implementing inclusive education. A total of fifteen research articles from ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar published between 2020 and 2024 were included in this review. The review identified two key strategies to tackle these challenges: providing comprehensive teacher training programs and promoting the use of Universal Design Learning (UDL) in schools. Teachers' training can help teachers improve their understanding of student diversity, identify learning barriers, adapt teaching methods, enhance teachers' skills in managing inclusive classrooms, and change their attitudes towards inclusion. Teachers' training can create a supportive and accepting environment for students, positively impacting their mental and emotional well-being. Meanwhile, UDL offers flexibility in presenting information to students, demonstrating knowledge and skills, and engaging with the learning process. By implementing UDL, behavior issues can be reduced, and an inclusive environment is fostered. It also enhances students' metacognitive abilities and ensures equal learning opportunities for all.

Keyword: *inclusive education, strategies implementation, teachers' training, universal design learning*

Abstrak

Pendidikan inklusif merupakan salah satu pendekatan paling sukses untuk memenuhi kebutuhan pendidikan siswa dengan kebutuhan pendidikan khusus (SEN). Namun, pelaksanaan pendidikan inklusif masih menghadapi beberapa tantangan. Reviu ini bertujuan untuk menjawab tantangan yang dihadapi pendidikan inklusif dan mengidentifikasi strategi yang efektif untuk keberhasilan penerapan pendidikan inklusif. Sebanyak lima belas artikel penelitian dari ERIC, ProQuest, dan Google Scholar yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 dan 2024 diulas dalam review ini. Hasil reviu mengidentifikasi dua strategi utama untuk mengatasi tantangan ini: menyediakan program pelatihan guru yang komprehensif dan mempromosikan penggunaan Universal Design Learning (UDL) di sekolah. Pelatihan guru dapat membantu guru meningkatkan pemahaman mereka tentang keragaman siswa, mengidentifikasi hambatan belajar, menyesuaikan metode pengajaran, meningkatkan keterampilan guru dalam mengelola kelas inklusif, dan mengubah sikap mereka terhadap inklusi. Pelatihan guru dapat menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung dan menerima bagi siswa, serta berdampak positif pada kesejahteraan mental dan emosional siswa. Sementara itu, UDL menawarkan fleksibilitas dalam menyajikan informasi kepada siswa, menunjukkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan, dan terlibat dengan proses pembelajaran. Dengan menerapkan UDL, masalah perilaku dapat berkurang, dan dapat menciptakan lingkungan yang inklusif. Hal ini juga dapat meningkatkan kemampuan metakognitif siswa dan memastikan kesempatan belajar yang sama untuk semua siswa.

Kata Kunci: *pendidikan inklusif, strategi implementasi, pelatihan guru, design pembelajaran universal*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an approach that ensures every child, regardless of their abilities, background, or differences, has the right to quality education (Ebersold & Watkins, 2011). It goes beyond merely accommodating students with disabilities; it aims to create an environment where all learners can participate, learn, and thrive together (UNICEF, 2017). In an inclusive education system, students with diverse needs, including those with disabilities, learn side by side with their peers in the same classrooms and schools. This approach values each student's unique contributions and recognizes that individual differences enrich the learning experience for everyone. Inclusive education promotes equity, social cohesion, and the development of essential life skills (Shaeffer, 2019).

Inclusive education offers several benefits. First, it fosters students' sense of belonging and acceptance, promoting empathy and understanding (Osterman, 2023). Second, it prepares all learners for life in a diverse society by exposing them to different perspectives and experiences (Guðjónsdóttir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016). Third, inclusive classrooms encourage collaboration (Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2020), problem-solving, and creativity (Kefallinou et al., 2020). However, implementing inclusive education faces challenges. These include the need for teacher training, accessible learning materials, and modifications to physical infrastructure. Additionally, overcoming stigma and changing attitudes toward disability is crucial. Despite these obstacles, inclusive education remains a powerful tool for promoting social justice, equal opportunities, and the holistic development of every child.

Inclusive education aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. The government, led by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, has established a clear legal framework for inclusive education in Indonesia by issuing an Act about inclusive education for student with special educational needs (Permendikbud No 70, 2009). This framework emphasizes non-discrimination, recognition, and the creation of safe learning environments for all students. Inclusive education goes beyond merely accommodating students with disabilities; it seeks to foster an environment where diverse learners can participate, learn, and thrive together. The Indonesian context recognizes the value of individual differences and aims to promote social cohesion, equity, and holistic development through inclusive practices.

Despite the progress, there are several challenges to implementing inclusive education in Indonesia. Many primary schools lack adequate infrastructure and accessible learning materials to support inclusive education. Physical modifications, assistive technologies, and adapted resources are essential for accommodating diverse needs (Chairunnisa & Rismita, 2022). Moreover, insufficient training for teachers remains a hurdle. Educators need specialized skills to address the diverse learning requirements of students with disabilities effectively (Chairunnisa & Rismita, 2022; Sari et al., 2022). Insufficient training for teachers also caused challenges in identifying and assessing children with disabilities. Accurate identification is crucial for providing appropriate support and accommodations (Rashid & Wong, 2022). Other hurdles to implementing inclusive education are some caregivers still believe that children with disabilities won't benefit as much as their peers without disabilities. Therefore, changing societal perceptions is essential for fostering an inclusive mindset (Chairunnisa & Rismita, 2022).

In summary, while Indonesia has made strides toward inclusive education, addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that every child receives a quality education, regardless of their abilities or differences. This review aims to explore strategies for the success of implementing inclusive education in Indonesia.

METHODS

To reach the aim of this study, the researcher reviewed the literature on inclusive education and strategies of implementation in Indonesia. The literature search used the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, and Google Scholar databases. The search used the terms inclusive education, strategies, and Implementation. The retrieved list of titles was further screened for the following inclusion criteria: language (English only), year published (since 2020), scientific rigor (including only articles in refereed journals), and type of article (only research). After omitting duplicates, excluding titles, and searching the full abstracts, 14 articles were included in this review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fifteen relevant papers were identified after conducting a keyword search. A comprehensive outline of these studies can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. List of articles used in the review.

No	Author (Year)	Journal	Strategies
1	Rasmitadila, Humaira, et al. (2023)	Journal of Education and e-Learning Research	Teachers' training
2	Ummah et al. (2024)	Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction	Teachers' training
3	Ediyanto and Kawai (2023)	Cogent Education	Teachers' training
4	Irvan et al. (2023)	Journal of Learning for Development	Teachers' training UDL
5	Rasmitadila, Rachmadtullah, et al. (2023)	Cogent Education	UDL
6	MacJessie-Mbew et al. (2023)	Educational Planning	Teachers' training
7	Hart (2024)	Journal of Pedagogical Research	Teachers' training
8	Timus et al. (2024)	Higher Education Research and Development	UDL
9	Gbebe (2023)	European Journal of Education	Teachers' training
10	Massouti et al. (2024)	Sustainability	Teachers' training
11	Driver et al. (2024)	Education Sciences	Teachers' training
12	Fernandez et al. (2023)	Education Sciences	Teachers' training
13	Moffat (2022)	Kairaranga	UDL
14	Roski et al. (2021)	Education Sciences	UDL
15	Griful-Freixenet et al. (2021)	Journal of Teacher Education	UDL

Teachers' training program

Teachers' training programs were among the most used strategies for implementing inclusive education (Ediyanto & Kawai, 2023; MacJessie-Mbew et al., 2023; Mendoza & Heymann, 2024; Rasmitadila, Humaira, et al., 2023). It has been proposed that teacher-training colleges and universities should invest in the development of comprehensive education programs that encompass a diverse array of theoretical concepts and practical experiences (MacJessie-Mbew et al., 2023). By integrating in-depth theoretical knowledge with hands-on practical application, future educators can be better equipped to fulfill their roles in the classroom effectively. This approach would emphasize the importance of a well-rounded and robust educational preparation for prospective teachers, ensuring that they are fully equipped to meet the challenges of the modern classroom environment.

The success of implementing certain practices is hindered by the limited duration of inclusive education training and the lack of follow-up training. This suggests that there is a need for more comprehensive and sustained training to support the effective implementation of inclusive education practices (Gbebe, 2023). Moreover, Gbebe (2023) also implies that teachers generously volunteer to participate in testing certain practices, such as evaluating class disposition. However, they often do not receive the necessary support and follow-up to help them address any challenges and correct any mistakes that may arise from their participation. This lack of support can make it difficult for teachers to effectively implement and refine these practices for the benefit of their students and themselves.

Participating in professional development programs tailored for educators has the potential to improve the utilization of teaching approaches, resulting in heightened teacher proficiency and self-reliance. The aforementioned process plays a crucial role in fostering the creation of efficient instructional systems that can be effectively implemented within various educational environments

(Rasmitadila, Rachmadtullah, et al., 2023). In addition to the aforementioned premises, Massouti et al. (2024) also underscored the importance of providing comprehensive training for all personnel who are involved in the education and care of special needs students. This training is essential for equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively cater to the unique and diverse needs of students with disabilities such as curriculum design and using assistive technology for teaching.

Teachers' training for inclusive education is important to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education. Some benefits of teachers' training are providing a deeper understanding of students' diversity and how to supply their needs and learning styles (Tristani & Bassett-Gunter, 2020). Trained teachers can identify learning barriers and adapt teaching methods according to individual needs (Tlale, 2013). Teachers' training also provides specific skills for teachers to manage inclusive classrooms, including differentiation strategies, behavior management, and the use of technology in education. Skilled teachers could deliver more effective support for special educational needs students.

Furthermore, teachers' training helps change teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and improving learning quality (Ediyanto & Kawai, 2023; Hart, 2024). Teachers learn how to respect the differences between students and address every student as unique and valuable. Trained teachers could optimize the learning process, plan relevant activities, ensure active participation among students, and also facilitate and strengthen collaboration between teachers, parents, and other stakeholders (Ummah et al., 2024). With all the advantages of the teachers' training above, we can ensure that students feel accepted and supported, which has a positive impact on their mental and emotional well-being.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) constitutes an educational framework designed to ensure that learning is accessible to students with diverse needs and abilities. UDL focuses on providing a learning environment, materials, and activities that are accessible for students with special educational needs (Irvan et al., 2023; Spencer, 2011). UDL not only benefits students with special needs but also benefits students without disabilities (Rasmitadila, Rachmadtullah, et al., 2023). The concept of UDL originates from universal design in architecture and city planning. For example, ramps and inclines on sidewalks are designed to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities but benefit everyone. By changing the environment to make it more accessible instead of forcing individuals to adapt to it, UDL creates a more equitable and inclusive space that provides immediate and practical benefits for everyone. UDL is designed to make the curriculum accessible for the majority of students rather than meeting the needs of every student in the classroom.

The UDL approach is based on three fundamental principles, which aim to provide diverse means of engagement, representation, and action and expression (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2021; Lin & Barber, 2022; Moffat, 2022). Engagement in UDL involves helping learners find their purpose, stay motivated, and develop an interest in the learning process (Boothe et al., 2018). UDL guidelines for engagement encourage the design of curriculum and instruction that incorporate options for perception, language, expression, symbolism, and comprehension. Some ways to implement this principle in the classroom are by using discussions and interactive activities. Facilitating group discussions with open-ended questions will encourage students to interact, talk, and listen with each other, which can develop their comprehension skills as well as their expression and perception.

The principle of representation in UDL advocates for offering students various avenues through which they can acquire new skills and information, such as different formats, media, and representations (Boothe et al., 2018). This principle is in favor of developing a curriculum and teaching methods that offer choices for physical movement, expressive abilities, proficiency, and cognitive processes. This principle can be implemented by providing a variety of learning materials using text, pictures, and video to help students understand the concept.

Lastly, the principle of action and expression emphasizes the importance of education that fosters students' strategic thinking, goal setting, and the ability to express their knowledge and skills in diverse ways (Boothe et al., 2018). The guidelines for action and expression in UDL encourage the creation of curriculum and teaching methods that offer various ways to spark interest, sustain effort and perseverance, and foster self-regulation. The principle can be implemented by allowing

students to choose how they want to demonstrate their understanding of the learning material, such as through essays, presentations, or videos. They can also work together with other students on a creative project to showcase their knowledge.

The UDL framework offers flexibility in how information is presented to students, how they demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and how they engage with the learning process. UDL has been shown to benefit all students, including those with special needs. By implementing UDL, behavior issues among students can be reduced as it fosters an inclusive environment where every student feels valued and engaged. Furthermore, UDL enhances students' metacognitive abilities, improves their access to the curriculum, and ensures equal learning opportunities for all (Izzo & Bauer, 2015; Spencer, 2011; Wu, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education has proof of its benefit for students' development, whether they have special educational needs or not. Nevertheless, the implementation of inclusive education is not without challenges. Several challenges in the implementation of inclusive education are the difficulty in assessing and evaluating diverse students, lack of training opportunities for teachers, insufficient funding, and challenges in accommodating the diverse needs of the students. These papers suggest ways to address these challenges: providing sufficient teachers' training programs and encouraging Universal Design Learning (UDL) in the school. Teachers' training provides teachers with the skills and knowledge required to assess and accommodate the diverse needs of special educational needs students. Meanwhile, the UDL principal takes proactive measures to ensure that all students have access to effective learning methods through various assessment and instructional strategies. This includes incorporating engagement, representation, and action and expression into the teaching approach, therefore catering to the diverse learning needs of the student body.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The corresponding author can confirm that all authors have had scientific contributions to this manuscript, with the first and second authors contributing the most to the conceptualization, design, analysis, and write-up of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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