



Synergy of inclusive school management in the administration of educational services for students with special needs

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Abstract. This research aims to analyze forms of synergy among stakeholders in inclusive school management and their contribution to the management of educational services for students with special needs. The research used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document review, then analyzed thematically through data reduction, data presentation, and interpretive meaning extraction to obtain a comprehensive description of collaborative practices in the school environment. The findings show that synergy among stakeholders, including school principals, classroom teachers, special assistant teachers, and parents, is formed through institutional commitment, collaborative coordination, and continuous

participatory communication. This synergy has a role in integrating individual learning program planning, aligning differentiated learning strategies, and strengthening academic and emotional support for students with special needs. An inclusive-religious school culture and the existence of internal support structures also strengthen the effectiveness of services. On the other hand, the dynamics of synergy are still influenced by variations in teachers' professional capacities and limited support resources, so the need to strengthen collaborative management and continuous competency development is relevant. In general, the research results confirm that inclusive school management synergy is a key mechanism in ensuring the sustainability, quality, and responsiveness of educational services for students with special needs at the school level.

Introduction

Inclusive education is an educational paradigm that emphasizes open access to learning for all students, including those with special needs, in the same school environment. This paradigm is based on the principles of fairness, equal opportunity, and respect for the different abilities, characters, and learning needs of each individual (Khasanah et al., 2025). In the context of national policy, inclusive education is in line with the mandate of the constitution and various regulations on fulfilling children's rights to quality education without discrimination (Chow & Toste, 2025).

In practice, inclusive education encompasses not only the integration of students with special needs into regular schools but also necessitates an effective school management system that is adaptive, collaborative, and oriented towards individual needs. This includes planning educational

services, organizing resources, implementing differentiated learning programs, and continuously evaluating student development (Trinidad, 2025). Thus, the success of inclusive education depends heavily on the quality of school management.

National data shows that the number of educational units that have students with special needs continues to increase from year to year. However, the proportion of schools that are truly ready in terms of human resources, supporting facilities, and learning service design is still relatively limited (Majoko, 2019). In many regions, there is still a limited number of special assistant teachers, suboptimal training in inclusive competencies for classroom teachers, and a lack of adaptive learning resources tailored to the characteristics of students with special needs (Hulme, 2025). This situation reinforces the importance of strengthening integrated school management in the implementation of inclusive education.

At the same time, there is an urgent need for an inclusive school management model based on synergy among stakeholders. Schools cannot work partially in managing services for students with special needs, because their educational process requires multidimensional support, including academic, social-emotional, and psychological support (Setiawan & Tohari, 2025). Therefore, collaboration between school principals, teachers, parents, experts, and the educational community is a strategic component in the provision of inclusive services.

MI Al-Islam Kartasura is one of the madrasah ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools) that conducts inclusive education services by involving students with special needs in the regular learning process. On the one hand, the presence of students with diverse learning needs provides an opportunity for schools to develop an inclusive culture and humanistic learning. However, on the other hand, this situation also presents managerial challenges, particularly in terms of arranging educational services that are tailored to the needs of each student (Said et al., 2023).

Based on initial observations at MI Al-Islam Kartasura, several challenges have emerged, including a limited number of special teaching assistants, the need to develop teachers' competencies in differentiated learning, and poor routine coordination between the school, parents, and external parties such as psychologists or related experts. In addition, the administration of inclusive services, data collection on student development, and the provision of learning support facilities still need to be strengthened systematically.

Nevertheless, the school has shown a strong commitment to developing inclusive education practices through various efforts, such as building a culture of acceptance of student differences, facilitating communication between teachers and parents, and striving to adjust learning strategies in the classroom (Mahmud et al., 2025). Although these practices are early indicators of a synergistic process in school management, they still require further development to become more structured and sustainable.

The concept of synergy in inclusive school management presupposes the integration of roles, functions, and responsibilities among various parties involved in the management of educational services (Irocha et al., n.d.). This synergy includes the formulation of inclusive internal policies, coordination of service programs, collaboration among teachers in designing adaptive learning, and the active involvement of parents and the community in supporting the development of students with special needs (Mutaqin et al., 2024). With strong synergy, it is hoped that educational services will not only be administrative in character but also truly responsive to children's needs.

In the context of MI Al-Islam Kartasura, it is important to examine how school management synergy is built and implemented in the provision of inclusive educational services. This research is not only relevant to the development of managerial practices in the school but also contributes to the development of inclusive school management models at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level more broadly. In addition, the results of the research are expected to provide a realistic description of

the dynamics of collaborative work in the management of educational services for students with special needs (Widya & Rifma, 2020).

According to the above description, this research focuses on the synergy of inclusive school management in administering educational services for students with special needs at MI Al-Islam Kartasura. This approach is expected to reveal the supporting factors and obstacles to synergy among stakeholders in inclusive education practices. Thus, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to strengthening inclusive school management in primary education

Method

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design focused on the implementation of inclusive school management at MI Al-Islam Kartasura. The research subjects included the principal, classroom teachers, special assistant teachers (GPK), the school committee, and parents of students with special needs who were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the management of inclusive education services. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies of school programs, administrative tools, and student development records. Data analysis was conducted interactively following the Miles & Huberman model, which included data reduction, data presentation, and repeated conclusion drawing/verification. Data validity was ensured through source, technique, and time triangulation, member checking, and peer discussion. The research was conducted in three stages, namely pre-fieldwork, data collection, and analysis of research results.

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Synergy of Inclusive School Management in Managing Educational Services for Students with Special Needs

The research results indicate that the synergy of inclusive school management at MI Al-Islam Kartasura is formed through the integration of roles between the Madrasah principal, classroom teachers, special assistant teachers (GPK), and parents of students with special needs within the framework of managing educational services that are oriented towards the individual needs of students. The principal positions himself as the director of inclusive policies by encouraging the creation of a school culture that accepts differences and opens up space for collaboration between stakeholders. Interview data with the principal shows that every decision related to PDBK (students with special needs) services always involves deliberation with teachers and GPK so that policies are not top-down but participatory (Komalasari & Wahab Jufri, n.d.). This finding is in line with the concept of inclusive leadership, which emphasizes the importance of the role of school leaders in building a collaborative structure and a work environment that supports the management of inclusive services.

In terms of educational service planning, the research found that schools systematically develop program plans by preparing Annual Inclusive Service Programs, which include an agenda for identifying student needs, developing individual learning programs (PPI), and planning to strengthen academic and social support (Jaya et al., 2023). Coordination meetings, comprising teachers, special assistant teachers (GPK), and curriculum coordinators, facilitate this planning. Documentation data indicates the presence of individual learning needs sheets and initial assessment records, which serve as the foundation for the formulation of learning programs. This practice exemplifies the implementation of planning functions in inclusive management, as

highlighted in the literature, which asserts that the management of PDBK services necessitates plans grounded in the actual needs of students, rather than mere administrative modifications to the standard curriculum (Akbar & Arifin Author, 2025).

The organization of inclusive services at MI Al-Islam Kartasura shows a clear and distributed work structure. Classroom teachers are responsible for the main learning process in regular classes, special assistant teachers (GPK) are responsible for assessing development, providing individual assistance, and facilitating modifications to learning materials according to the needs of students with special needs. Observation data shows direct coordination between classroom teachers and special assistant teachers (GPK) prior to teaching, especially in determining material differentiation strategies and adjusting evaluation methods. This practice is in line with the co-teaching model in inclusive education, where task organization is collaborative and complementary to achieve adaptive learning objectives for each student.

At the level of learning implementation, management synergy is evident through the implementation of differentiated learning tailored to the cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics of students with special needs. Teachers use various methods, such as visual-audio approaches, picture cards, repetitive learning activities, and the simplification of instructions in the form of concrete sentences (Eksaputra Nugraha et al., n.d.). Classroom observations indicate that students with mild learning disabilities are given extra time to complete tasks, while students with attention deficits are given step-by-step learning activities to maintain focus. These findings indicate that the school does not implement homogeneous learning but integrates the principles of differentiated instruction as a pedagogical response in line with contemporary inclusive learning theory (Khoirin Nisa' et al., 2023).

Management synergy is also seen in the system for assessing student development. Teachers and special assistant teachers (GPK) compile periodic development reports using developing individual learning programs (PPI) monitoring sheets that include academic indicators, adaptive behaviour, social interaction, and independence development. Documentation data shows quarterly development records that are used as material for reflection in follow-up coordination meetings. The assessment process is carried out not only to assess learning outcomes but also emphasizes the evaluation of the process, continuity, and individual progress of students (Council for Special Education, n.d.). This practice demonstrates conformity with the principle of continuous assessment in inclusive education, in which assessment is positioned as a tool for pedagogical decision-making, not as a tool for comparing abilities between students.

The partnership between schools and parents is an important part of the synergy of inclusive service management. Interviews with parents of students with special needs showed that schools regularly hold meetings to discuss students' learning progress and encourage parents to participate in stimulating learning at home. Parents are involved in decision-making related to learning modifications and psychosocial support for their children (Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, 2024). This practice reflects the principal of school-family partnership, in which the success of inclusive services is considered a shared responsibility between schools and families. Field data shows that communication between schools and parents is conducted through face-to-face meetings, daily coordination messages, and informal consultations, thereby strengthening the continuity of services between the educational environment and the home (Sulasmi & Akrim, 2020).

Regarding the school culture perspective, the research found that MI Al-Islam Kartasura fosters a social climate that embraces diversity through instilling religious values, empathy, politeness, and respect for others. Observations of student interactions in the classroom and school environment show that students with special needs participate in classroom activities without discrimination or labelling that distinguishes them from other students. Teachers also consistently provide positive reinforcement to build students' self-confidence. These findings demonstrate the

school's success in forming an inclusive school climate, wherein inclusive services are not only implemented at the technical level of learning but are also rooted in the school's values and culture.

Strengthening management synergy was also evident in the development of teacher competencies. Documentation data showed that some teachers and GPK participated in inclusive education training organized by government agencies and education partners. Interview results indicate that the training has strengthened understanding of special needs assessment, learning modification strategies, and appropriate communication approaches for students with special needs. These findings demonstrate the school's commitment to human resource capacity building as part of the implementation of capacity building in inclusive education management so that teachers' abilities continue to be aligned with the demands of adaptive and professional services (Kalimantan & Muhdi, n.d.).

The research identified two primary forms of coordination in organizational communication within the school: formal communication, which occurred during meetings, supervision, and administrative reports, and informal communication, which transpired through daily discussions among teachers and spontaneous consultations between teachers and special assistant teachers (GPK). Field data indicated that informal communication frequently emerged as a crucial avenue for rapid decision-making concerning learning strategies for students with special needs (PDBK), particularly when classroom alterations were necessary. This communication pattern indicates a shared framework that fosters effective management synergy, characterized by open and functional information flow rather than centralization.

Curriculum management in the inclusive context at MI Al-Islam Kartasura shows the implementation of a regular curriculum combined with content adaptation in certain subjects according to the needs of students with special needs. Teachers simplify indicators, adjust workloads, and modify assessment forms without removing the essence of core competencies. Learning document data shows that there are notes on the differentiation of learning objectives for certain students who require special support. This approach demonstrates consistency with the concept of curriculum adaptation in inclusive education management, wherein the curriculum remains within the regular framework but is processed flexibly so as to continue to provide fair learning access for all students (Eka Priyantoro et al., 2025).

The research results also demonstrate that MI Al-Islam Kartasura conducts academic supervision within the framework of continuous guidance. The principal conducts supervision that focuses on assisting teachers in implementing inclusive learning strategies, not merely as an administrative evaluation (Agency for Special Needs & Education, n.d.). Teachers and special assistant teachers (GPK) jointly reflect on the supervision results to identify improvements to learning strategies. These findings indicate the application of a developmental supervision approach, which is relevant in the context of inclusive schools because it positions supervision as a means of professional strengthening as well as a controller of the quality of educational services for students with special needs (PDBK).

Overall, the research results indicate that the synergy of inclusive school management at MI Al-Islam Kartasura is built through functional integration between planning, organizing, implementing learning, assessing development, institutional communication, and partnerships with parents. This synergy is not only at the structural level, but it is also seen in daily practices like working together, having a school culture that includes everyone, and a shared commitment to meeting the learning needs of students with special needs. These findings show that the success of inclusive service management is not the result of individual work but rather the outcome of the interconnectedness of all school components working toward a single goal: ensuring fair and adaptive access to quality education services for all students.

2. Supporting and obstructing factors of synergy among stakeholders in inclusive education practices at MI Al-Islam Kartasura

The results of the research show that inclusive education practices at MI Al-Islam Kartasura are not only understood as a process of integrating students with special needs into regular classes but also as a collaborative system involving various stakeholders the principal, classroom teachers, special assistant teachers (GPK), parents, and elements of the school environment. Synergy among stakeholders is a key prerequisite for the successful management of inclusive education services because each actor has complementary functions, authorities, and contributions. Field findings show that coordination does not occur spontaneously but arises from a structured managerial process through planning, communication, role sharing, and the formation of an inclusive school culture (Bastiana & Syamsuddin, 2025).

From the perspective of educational management, synergy is understood as the integration of functions and working relationships that enable decisions, policies, and learning practices to be consistent with the needs of students with special needs. This is in line with Ainscow and Booth's view that inclusive education is a systemic practice that requires collective agency, not individual work (Marja et al., n.d.). Therefore, the quality of inclusive services is greatly influenced by the extent to which actors in schools can build coordination, pedagogical understanding, and a shared commitment to the value of educational justice (Suwandari et al., 2021). Based on this framework, the research findings then identified two main dimensions that influence the sustainability of synergy, namely supporting factors that strengthen collaborative practices and inhibiting factors that have the potential to restrict the effectiveness of coordination in the implementation of inclusive education.

a) Supporting Factors for Synergy among stakeholders

The results of the research indicate that the main supporting factors for synergy in inclusive education practices at MI Al-Islam Kartasura are:

- 1) The school leadership's commitment to providing inclusive services.
The principal consistently promotes a culture of acceptance of student diversity and ensures that school policies are geared toward providing optimal support for students with special needs. The provision of coordination spaces, the strengthening of the GPK's role, and flexibility in learning management reflect this commitment. These findings are in line with the theory of inclusive school leadership, which places the role of the leader as a driver of institutional collaboration.
- 2) The pedagogical competence and openness of teachers toward inclusive learning.
Teachers demonstrate readiness to adapt materials, differentiation strategies, and active collaboration with GPK. Training, internal discussions, and reflective practices strengthen this capacity. From a capacity-building perspective, improving teacher competence contributes directly to the effectiveness of synergy because it creates harmony between conceptual understanding and instructional practice.
- 3) Constructive partnership between schools and parents.
Communication established through regular meetings, daily consultations, and progress reports ensures the continuity of inclusive education services between home and school. This model is in line with the school–family partnership framework, in which family involvement serves to strengthen the continuity of student learning support.
- 4) An inclusive school climate
This has a role as a cultural factor that supports synergy. A social environment that emphasizes empathy, togetherness, and appreciation of differences allows PDBK to interact naturally within the school community. This strengthens the sense of belonging while minimizing symbolic segregation in the learning space.

- 5) The school implements flexible communication and coordination mechanisms. Coordination takes place through formal (meetings, supervision, reports) and informal (daily discussions, spontaneous consultations) channels. Open communication patterns enable quick, responsive decision-making based on the real needs of students.

b) **Hindering Factors for Synergy among stakeholders**

On the other hand, the research identified several factors that could potentially hinder the sustainability of synergy. The first factor is the imbalance in the workload of teachers and GPK, especially in managing classes with quite diverse learning needs. This condition has an impact on the limitations of the ideal intensity of individual assistance and implies a decrease in the effectiveness of operational coordination.

The second factor is the limitation of adaptive learning tools, such as special media, visual aids, or facilities to support individual assessment. This limitation means that some learning adaptations still depend on the creativity of teachers without adequate resource support. From a resource-based management perspective, facilities are an important structural element that determines the quality of inclusive service implementation.

The third factor is the difference in parents' understanding of the concept of inclusive education. Some parents still focus solely on academic results, while schools emphasize holistic development (academic, social, emotional, and independence). This difference in orientation causes a mismatch in the patterns of support between home and school.

In addition, the research found that interdisciplinary reflection forums are not yet held periodically. Although informal coordination is intensive, not all successful practices are documented and standardized as a common reference (Ikhwan et al., 2025). From an organizational learning perspective, the limitations of systematic reflection have the potential to hinder the accumulation of institutional knowledge in inclusive practices.

Discussion

The synergy between stakeholders in inclusive education at MI Al-Islam Kartasura shows that the success of managing services for students with special needs is not only determined by school policy but also by the degree of collaboration, communication, and alignment of roles between the principal, classroom teachers, assistant teachers, parents, and external partners. This finding is in line with Bush's (2011) view that effective education management relies on the systemic coordination of organizational actors, wherein each stakeholder contributes to a common goal. In the context of inclusive education, such synergy is a prerequisite for creating a school climate that is supportive, responsive, and adaptive to the diverse needs of students (Wulandari & Madhakomala, 2024).

In terms of supporting factors, research shows that institutional commitment is the main foundation for building synergy. The principal prioritizes inclusion programs in policy, internalizing the values of humanism, equality, and educational justice into the school culture. This viewpoint aligns with the notion of school leadership for inclusion (Ainscow & Booth, 2015), which underscores that inclusive leadership fosters the engagement of all school constituents through a shared vision. This commitment is reinforced by the availability of structural roles such as special assistant teachers (GPK), who act as academic and emotional liaisons between classroom teachers, students, and parents. This role aligns with the theory of collaborative service delivery in special education, wherein cross-role support enhances the quality of learning interventions (Syaeudin Sa et al., 2024).

In addition, the openness of communication among stakeholders is a significant supporting element. The practice of routine coordination through inclusion team meetings, case consultations, and informal communication based on trust demonstrates a stable pattern of collaborative interaction. These findings reinforce the Professional Learning Community model (Kultsum, 2025), which asserts that organizational learning occurs when teachers and stakeholders engage in reflective dialogue and joint decision-making. At the practical level, intensive communication enables the synchronization of individual learning programs (PPI), the adjustment of differentiation strategies, and the strengthening of emotional support for students (Nur Baiti et al., 2021).

The next supporting factor relates to parental involvement as educational partners. Their involvement is not only administrative but also includes sharing information about their children's development, supporting learning at home, and collaborating in service evaluation. This is consistent with Epstein's (2011) theory of school–family partnership, which emphasizes that the success of inclusive education is greatly influenced by the interconnectedness of the roles of families and schools in the learning ecosystem. In the context of MI Al-Islam, parental participation strengthens the continuity of support across settings (school–home), so that the service process runs more integrative.

On the other hand, factors supporting synergy are also evident in the cultural-religious dimension of the institution, which reflects values of compassion, social concern, and respect for differences. These values foster an inclusive habitus, wherein school members regard students with special needs as integral components of the learning community, rather than as distinct entities. Theoretically, this condition is in line with the concept of inclusive school culture (Fajarwati, 2017), which frames organizational culture as a determinant of teachers' attitudes, behaviours, and professional practices toward student diversity.

Meanwhile, factors inhibiting synergy are more related to structural and professional capacity aspects. First, variations in teachers' competencies in handling special needs cause asymmetry in collaborative contributions. Some teachers still rely on general learning approaches, so that the role of GPK becomes dominant in-service planning. This condition confirms the findings of Friend & Cook (2013) that collaboration will be less than optimal if team members have significant differences in pedagogical readiness. In this context, synergy has not fully transitioned into shared expertise but still relies on certain actors.

The next obstacle relates to the limitations of service support facilities, which have an impact on the creative space for program collaboration (Tanzi & Hermanto, 2024). The lack of equal availability of adaptive learning tools has forced teachers to improvise in designing interventions, shifting part of the coordination process towards technical handling rather than strengthening collaborative learning strategies. This is in line with the Resource-Based School Management perspective, which explains that the quality of synergy between actors is greatly influenced by the adequacy of organizational resources that support the collaboration process.

Another obstacle arises in the dimension of coordination rhythm among stakeholders, which is not yet fully systematic. Although communication is intensive, some processes are still reactive and case-based, rather than based on long-term collaborative cycle planning. When linked to the strategic collaboration cycle theory (Nur Fauzi et al., n.d.), this condition shows that synergy has been formed at the operational level but has not been fully consolidated at the organizational strategic planning level.

Therefore, this research shows that synergy in inclusive education at MI Al-Islam Kartasura moves within a spectrum between strong cultural-collaborative forces on one side and the challenges of structural and professional capacity on the other. The field findings theoretically confirm that institutional commitment, inclusive leadership, participatory communication, and family partnerships form synergy, not spontaneously. However, at the same time, it still faces

resource constraints and competency gaps that need to be developed through the continuous strengthening of inclusive school management.

Conclusion

The results of the research show that synergy between stakeholders, namely the principal, classroom teachers, special assistant teachers, and parents, plays a strategic role in the management of inclusive education services at MI Al-Islam Kartasura. This synergy is realized through leadership commitment, collaborative coordination, participatory communication, and an inclusive school culture that is oriented towards the needs of students.

In the context of inclusive education practices, the existence of internal support structures, parental involvement, and the role of special assistant teachers contribute to the consistency of learning services for students with special needs. At the same time, variations in teachers' professional capacities and resource limitations indicate the need for strengthening collaborative management and continuous competency development to support the improvement of inclusive services at the school level.

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