

Inclusive Curriculum Management in Early Childhood Education to Realize Welcoming and Meaningful Learning

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood education (PAUD) provides strategic services in improving the quality of child development. The implementation of inclusive curriculum management is one effort to realize fair, friendly, and meaningful learning for all students without discrimination. This article will present the concept, implementation, and objectives of inclusive education for early childhood to make learning more meaningful. This research uses a literature study method, data obtained through a review of various scientific sources, including books, national and international journal articles, and policy documents related to inclusive education and PAUD curriculum. The results of the study indicate that inclusive curriculum management includes four main functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum that is flexibly designed according to the characteristics of students. To realize the implementation of inclusive education, it is supported by assessment, differentiated learning planning, and teacher resources. The implementation of inclusive curriculum management can increase children's participation in the learning process, optimize the development of all aspects of child development, and create a learning environment that respects diversity.

Keywords: *Inclusive Curriculum Management, Early Childhood Education, Differentiated Learning, Assessment, Child Development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Golden Age, or the golden period of 0 to 6 years, is a very important period, like building a building, then early childhood is the foundation of the building, if the foundation is strong then the building will be able to stand firmly against rain and floods, even earthquakes. Early Childhood Development is very important in determining the growth and development for the future, by providing appropriate education and care, children's development during this Early Age period will develop optimally. During this period is very important, because 75% of brain development is formed, social, cognitive, language, emotional and psychomotor development develops rapidly. To be able to stimulate this development requires appropriate advice, guidance and support, for both normal children and children with special needs.

Children with special needs are children who experience obstacles or advantages in their development. Because of this condition, ABK requires services, interventions and a conducive environment to optimize their development. The rapid development of technology that is felt, results in many negative influences on child development, this research feels important because currently more and more children are experiencing developmental delays, one of which is from conditions of exposure to gadgets and also parenting patterns at home, starting from learning disorders, communication disorders and even ADHD, children who experience things like this need friendly and comfortable learning, so that their right to learn is still fulfilled.

Inclusive curriculum management is a curriculum management process designed to meet the learning needs of all students through an adaptive, flexible, and child-centered approach. Its implementation is not only oriented towards achieving academic competencies, but also on developing all aspects of child development, such as religious and moral values, social-emotional, language, cognitive, physical motor skills, and the arts. In reality, many early childhood education (PAUD) schools still accept children with special needs without understanding inclusive curriculum management. However, in its implementation, teachers are required to be able to apply differentiated learning that provides opportunities for each child to learn according to their readiness, interests, and learning profile. In addition, authentic assessment is an important part in identifying a child's overall development so that learning programs can be tailored to individual needs. Successful inclusive curriculum management also requires collaboration between the principal, teachers, parents, and other professionals in creating a supportive learning environment. With good management, an inclusive curriculum can improve the quality of PAUD services that are oriented towards fulfilling the rights of every child.

Various studies have shown that the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia still faces numerous challenges. Commonly encountered problems include limited teacher competency in developing adaptive curricula, minimal training on inclusive education, limited accessible facilities and infrastructure, and suboptimal collaboration between schools and parents. Furthermore, most studies on inclusive education still focus on learning strategies or services for children with special needs. Studies specifically addressing inclusive curriculum management in early childhood education (PAUD) units are still relatively limited, particularly those that integrate curriculum management functions with inclusive education principles. This situation indicates a need to expand studies on curriculum management as a strategic factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, a discussion on inclusive curriculum management is relevant to provide a more comprehensive picture of curriculum management practices in PAUD institutions.

This article offers the perspective that the success of inclusive education depends not only on the teacher's readiness to teach, but also on the quality of curriculum management implemented by educational institutions. This is in line with UNESCO's (2017) opinion, which states that meeting the diversity of student needs significantly influences the success of inclusive education [1]. Systematic curriculum management allows each learning component to be designed more adaptively to the diverse needs of students. This approach places children at the center of learning by providing equal opportunities to develop according to their individual potential. Furthermore, inclusive curriculum management encourages the creation of a school culture that values diversity, collaboration, and the active participation of all school members. The novelty of this article lies in its discussion that integrates curriculum management functions with the learning characteristics of inclusive early childhood education (PAUD), resulting in a more comprehensive learning management model. Therefore, this article is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of curriculum management in PAUD institutions that provide inclusive education.

Based on the above description, a discussion on inclusive curriculum management is crucial in efforts to improve the quality of Early Childhood Education services. This article aims to examine the concepts, principles, implementation, and strategies for managing an inclusive curriculum to create friendly and meaningful learning for all students. Furthermore, this article also identifies various challenges faced by Early Childhood Education institutions in implementing an inclusive

curriculum and offers alternative solutions that can be implemented. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for school principals, teachers, Early Childhood Education managers, and policymakers in developing a more adaptive and inclusive curriculum. Academically, this article is expected to enrich the study of inclusive curriculum management in Early Childhood Education. Practically, the results of the discussion are expected to serve as a reference in improving the quality of educational services that are equitable, respect diversity, and oriented towards the optimal development of each child.

2. METHODS

This research uses a literature study approach, namely the data used are all research results that have been published or personal collections, literature studies are often also associated with theoretical foundations or studies of various theories, namely theories used to analyze research [2]. A qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because it focuses on an in-depth, scientific, and contextual understanding of phenomena without providing direct treatment or experimentation in the field. Through a literature review, this research explores written documents to map the dynamics of inclusive curriculum governance, from the planning stage to the evaluation of learning.

The use of library methods allows researchers to reconstruct theoretical ideas and public policies critically to describe objective reality in inclusive PAUD institutions. Descriptive research studies problems in society, as well as procedures that apply in society and certain situations, including the relationship between activities, attitudes, views, and ongoing processes and the influence of a phenomenon. Descriptive research is a research method that attempts to describe the object or subject being studied according to what it is.[2]Through this paradigm, separate empirical findings are synthesized into a unified understanding of effective and adaptive inclusive curriculum governance.

2.1 Strategy for Obtaining and Selecting Study Materials

The study material for this research was obtained through structured documentation techniques from various credible literature sources. The data collection process focused on searching for primary and secondary documents relevant to the study's focus. The literature sources collected included textbooks on educational methodology and management, reputable scientific journal articles, previous research reports, and government policy documents related to standards for implementing inclusive education for early childhood.

The library materials were selected selectively, establishing inclusion criteria based on substantive relevance, publication timeliness, and methodological adherence. The selection criteria focused on literature reviewing the planning of the Independent Curriculum or Independent Learning options, the implementation of the Individual Learning Program (PPI), the availability of specialized infrastructure, and leadership patterns and professional collaboration in inclusive early childhood education (PAUD).

Literature Source Category	Document / Publication Type	Selection Criteria (Inclusion)	Contribution to Management Studies
Policy & Regulation Documents	Academic papers, ministerial decrees, technical guidelines for inclusive PAUD	Active regulations regarding the implementation of inclusive PAUD and instructions for modifying learning.	Provide normative guidelines and a legal framework for inclusive curriculum governance.

Literature Source Category	Document / Publication Type	Selection Criteria (Inclusion)	Contribution to Management Studies
Empirical Scientific Journal	Qualitative research articles, case studies, and the phenomenon of inclusive PAUD	Indexed scientific publications that examine management practices, PPI, and supporting facilities.	Presenting a factual picture of the dynamics, challenges, and successes in the field.
Academic Textbooks	Academic publications in the fields of Early Childhood Education, inclusion, and research methodology	Contains theoretical foundations for curriculum management, child development, and qualitative analysis.	Forming a conceptual framework for analyzing and reconstructing library data.

The document sorting procedure begins with a scan of the title and abstract, followed by a thorough evaluation of the content before the sources are deemed worthy of synthesis. This ensures that all analyzed study material has scientific credibility and directly contributes to the research focus.

2.2 Literature Data Analysis and Synthesis Procedures

The qualitative data analysis procedure in this literature study adapts Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, implemented systematically and continuously. Qualitative data analysis is a reflective and contextual process aimed at discovering the meaning and logical relationships behind written information. This analysis process involves three main operational stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification.

Data Analysis Stages	Operational Activities	Analytical Output
1. Data Reduction	Selection, focusing, simplification, and abstraction of raw data from bibliographic records.	Data extracts focused on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of inclusive curriculum.
2. Data Presentation (Data Display)	Organizing information into structured narratives and conceptual comparison matrices.	An integrated description of curriculum governance patterns and PPI modifications in PAUD institutions.
3. Conclusion Drawing	Formation of meaning synthesis, identification of relationship patterns, and inductive verification of findings.	Theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations regarding inclusive curriculum management.

The data reduction phase began with recording, summarizing, and categorizing core concepts from the collected literature. Less relevant information was removed to allow researchers to focus on key dimensions of curriculum management, such as the development of the PPI, the provision of supporting facilities, and leadership strategies. The data was then presented in a comprehensive narrative and structured tables to map causal relationships and interrelationships

between concepts. The analysis process concluded with inductive drawing of conclusions, where findings from various sources were integrated to construct a new framework for thinking about inclusive curriculum management.

2.3 Managerial Implications and Synthesis of Inclusive Curriculum Findings

A qualitative synthesis of literature suggests that inclusive curriculum management at the early childhood education (PAUD) level requires a systemic approach that goes beyond simply adapting teaching materials. Curriculum management includes operational adaptations in the form of Individual Learning Programs (IPPs) designed based on the results of initial developmental assessments of children with special needs. Policy options such as Independent Learning within the Independent Curriculum provide educators with the flexibility to modify achievement indicators without separating children from the regular learning environment.

The supporting aspect of curriculum management also relies heavily on the availability of adaptive supporting facilities and infrastructure. Inclusive early childhood education institutions are required to provide special spaces, such as observation rooms, consultation rooms, and relaxation rooms or quiet corners to help children with special needs manage their emotions when experiencing overstimulation. The presence of these facilities is crucial for creating a safe and conducive inclusive learning climate.

The application of library research with a qualitative descriptive approach has proven effective in presenting a comprehensive overview of inclusive curriculum management in early childhood education (PAUD) in a concise and easy-to-understand manner. Through selective document selection procedures and interactive data analysis based on reduction, presentation, and verification, this study successfully integrated various theories and empirical findings. The success of inclusive curriculum management in early childhood education is largely determined by the effectiveness of management, which includes assessment-based planning, resource organization, implementation of differentiated learning, and ongoing evaluation [1]. integration between PPI-based adaptive learning planning, provision of special physical facilities, and collaborative leadership involving parents and multidisciplinary experts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Concept of Inclusive Curriculum Management in Early Childhood Education

Inclusive education is education that provides services to children with special needs or intelligence that exceeds the average as well as children who have obstacles in their development. Inclusive education is an educational approach that emphasizes equal access and the elimination of discrimination by uniting all students, including children with special needs (ABK), in the same learning environment (Sahrudin et al., 2023). At the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level, the implementation of inclusive education is becoming increasingly important because early childhood is a golden period that determines the development of cognitive abilities, language, social emotional, physical motor skills, religious and moral values, and children's art. Therefore, every child needs a learning environment that is able to appreciate their uniqueness and potential.

UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that inclusive education is a systematic effort to eliminate various barriers to learning so that all children can participate optimally in the educational process. The goal of inclusive education is to provide quality, needs-appropriate education, improve various aspects of development, and strengthen the values of equality and tolerance [3]. This concept demonstrates that inclusive education is not only about the presence of children with special needs in regular schools, but also about creating a learning system that values diversity as part of the educational process.

In the PAUD context, the success of inclusive education is not only determined by the teacher's readiness to teach, but also by the quality of curriculum management implemented in educational institutions. Curriculum is part of its content standards. Content is the main idea that

becomes the basis and guideline in arranging learning activities at school. Without a curriculum, schools will be confused about where to take learning [4]. Therefore, curriculum management must be designed flexibly to adapt to the developmental characteristics of each child. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), an effective education system must be built on an analysis of student needs so that every learning decision has a strong foundation. This opinion aligns with Moleong (2021), who stated that a qualitative approach to education places an understanding of individual characteristics as the foundation for designing meaningful learning processes. Therefore, curriculum management is a crucial instrument in connecting educational objectives with the real needs of students in early childhood education settings.

Conceptually, inclusive curriculum management can be understood as the systematic process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students without exception. The planning function includes establishing learning objectives, analyzing children's needs, selecting materials, and determining adaptive learning strategies. The organizing function relates to the division of teacher tasks, managing resources, and providing a safe and accessible learning environment. Furthermore, the implementation function emphasizes the application of differentiated learning, the use of varied media, and providing opportunities for each child to actively participate according to their individual abilities. The evaluation function aims to assess the effectiveness of learning and serves as a basis for continuous curriculum improvement. These four functions are interrelated and form a management cycle oriented towards improving the quality of educational services.

The results of various studies show that flexible curriculum management has main principles, several important aspects, namely the equal right to education, without discrimination, diversity, participation, accessibility and child-centered learning [5]. Similar findings were also put forward by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2021), who stated that the success of inclusive education is greatly influenced by teachers' ability to design learning that can accommodate student diversity without providing discriminatory treatment [6]. At the early childhood education level, this approach is realized through play activities designed flexibly so that all children can participate according to their developmental level and interests. This demonstrates that an inclusive curriculum is not simply an administrative document, but rather a concrete guideline for creating enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

In addition to focusing on achieving children's developmental competencies, inclusive curriculum management also plays a strategic role in building a school culture that values diversity. An inclusive learning environment encourages children to learn to respect each other, cooperate, and accept differences as part of social life [7]. Teachers are no longer the sole source of learning, but rather facilitators capable of creating a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable learning environment for all students. Principals also have a responsibility to ensure that all policies, programs, and learning activities accommodate the principles of inclusivity. Therefore, the success of inclusive curriculum management is the result of collaboration between teachers, principals, parents, and various other stakeholders in creating an educational ecosystem that supports the optimal development of each child.

Based on a synthesis of various theories and previous research findings, it is clear that inclusive curriculum management in early childhood education (PAUD) is the primary foundation for equitable education. The curriculum is no longer viewed as a uniform learning tool, but rather as a dynamic system capable of adapting to the needs of each student. Flexibility in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating allows every child to receive equal learning opportunities without neglecting their individual characteristics. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive curriculum management needs to be part of the strategic policies of PAUD institutions to improve the quality of educational services. The results of this study also demonstrate that good curriculum management not only impacts the quality of learning but also contributes to creating a friendly, meaningful learning environment that values diversity as a strength in the educational process.

Principles of Inclusive Curriculum Management in Early Childhood Education

Inclusive curriculum management in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is based on the principle that every child has an equal right to receive quality educational services regardless of physical, intellectual, social, cultural, linguistic, religious, or economic background. This principle aligns with the inclusive education paradigm, which positions diversity as a strength in the learning process, not as a barrier that must be separated. In the context of PAUD, each child is seen as a unique individual with different developmental characteristics, requiring flexible and responsive learning strategies to meet their individual needs. Therefore, curriculum management cannot be designed uniformly but must consider students' learning readiness, interests, abilities, and learning styles. This approach allows all children equal opportunities to develop optimally according to their potential. UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that inclusive education aims to increase the participation of all students by reducing various learning barriers that still exist in educational environments.

The second principle in inclusive curriculum management is equity, which refers to the provision of educational services based on the needs of each child, rather than treating all students equally. In practice, the concept of equity differs from equality. Equality places all students in identical learning conditions, while equity provides differentiated support according to each child's developmental needs so that all have equal opportunities to achieve learning goals. In early childhood education (PAUD), this principle is realized through modified play activities, the provision of varied learning media, adjustments to learning times, and the provision of gradual assistance (scaffolding) to children who need it. Thus, each child receives a learning experience appropriate to their capacity and developmental level without feeling discriminated against or excluded. This approach also strengthens children's self-confidence because each individual is given the opportunity to succeed according to their abilities [8].

The next principle is curriculum flexibility, which is the curriculum's ability to adapt learning objectives, materials, methods, media, and assessments based on student needs. Flexibility is a key characteristic of an inclusive curriculum because the diverse characteristics of children preclude the use of rigid learning strategies. Teachers are required to adapt learning without compromising the quality of developmental outcomes established in the national curriculum. At the early childhood education (PAUD) level, flexibility is realized through play activities with varying levels of difficulty so that all children can participate according to their individual abilities. Furthermore, the use of concrete media, educational games, illustrated stories, songs, movement, and environmental exploration provide alternative learning options that enable each child to gain meaningful learning experiences. A flexible curriculum also makes it easier for teachers to innovate learning according to the dynamics of student development and the school environment [8].

Another equally important principle is the active participation of all students in every learning activity. Inclusive education emphasizes that learning success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by children's active involvement in the learning process, social interactions, collaborative skills, and a growing sense of belonging to the school environment [6]. Therefore, teachers need to create a learning environment that allows all children to participate in play, discussion, exploration, and completing assignments together. Learning activities should be designed so that no child is isolated or merely an observer during the learning process. Through this active participation, children learn to develop communication skills, empathy, tolerance, and the ability to solve problems with their peers. Research on inclusive pedagogy shows that learning that provides opportunities for all students to participate will increase learning motivation and strengthen children's self-confidence.

Furthermore, the principle of collaboration is a crucial foundation for inclusive curriculum management. Curriculum management cannot be carried out solely by teachers, but requires close collaboration between the principal, classroom teachers, special education teachers (if available), parents, health workers, psychologists, and various other parties who support children's development [9]. The principal plays a role in formulating policies and providing resources to support the implementation of an inclusive curriculum. Teachers are responsible for designing and implementing adaptive learning, while parents provide information about their children's

characteristics and development at home, ensuring more targeted learning programs. Effective collaboration allows for continuity between school and home education, allowing comprehensive monitoring of children's development. A collaborative approach is also a key characteristic of inclusive schools, enabling them to continuously improve the quality of educational services.

The final principle is continuous improvement. Inclusive curriculum management does not stop at the implementation stage, but requires a periodic evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the implemented program. Evaluations are conducted on the achievement of learning objectives, the development of each child, the effectiveness of learning strategies, the use of media, and the readiness of the learning environment to support inclusive education. The evaluation results are then used as a basis for reflection and curriculum refinement, so that the learning program becomes more adaptive to the needs of students. Thus, an inclusive curriculum is dynamic and continuously evolving to adapt to changing child characteristics and the demands of educational development. Based on a synthesis of various theories and research findings, the application of these principles serves as the main foundation for building an inclusive curriculum management capable of realizing friendly, meaningful, participatory, and equitable early childhood education for all children.

Inclusive Curriculum Planning in Early Childhood Education

Planning is the initial function in curriculum management, determining the direction of learning in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) units. In inclusive education, the planning process is not only oriented towards developing learning programs but also aimed at accommodating the diverse characteristics, needs, abilities, and potential of each student. Good curriculum planning serves as a foundation for teachers in creating equitable, flexible, and meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, all curriculum components, from learning objectives and materials to strategies and media to assessments, must be designed based on the principle of inclusivity. According to Tomlinson (2021), effective learning begins with a planning process that considers students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles so that each child has the opportunity to develop optimally. Therefore, inclusive curriculum planning is a strategic step in realizing educational services that respect diversity and center on child needs.

The first step in planning an inclusive curriculum is identifying the characteristics and needs of students. Each child has a different family background, abilities, learning experiences, learning styles, and developmental stages, so teachers need to understand these conditions before developing a learning program. Identification can be done through observation, initial diagnostic assessments, interviews with parents, documentation of child development, and the results of previous learning evaluations. The information obtained serves as the basis for teachers in determining the form of learning services that are appropriate to each child's needs. Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasize that decision-making in the educational process should be based on accurate data so that the designed program truly suits the actual conditions of the students. Therefore, the process of identifying needs is an integral step in inclusive curriculum planning.

Once the characteristics of the students are understood, teachers develop flexible learning objectives that are oriented toward child development. In the context of early childhood education (PAUD), learning objectives not only emphasize cognitive achievement but also encompass the development of religious and moral values, social-emotional skills, language, physical motor skills, and the arts, as outlined in the national curriculum. In inclusive education, learning objectives can have different achievement indicators according to the abilities and needs of each student. This adjustment does not mean reducing the quality of learning, but rather providing equal opportunities for each child to achieve optimal development. [10] Florian and Black-Hawkins (2021) explain that inclusive education requires teachers to design learning objectives that are accessible to all students through a variety of alternative learning strategies. Therefore, flexibility in developing learning objectives is a key characteristic of an inclusive curriculum.

The next component in curriculum planning is the selection of materials, strategies, media, and learning environments that support student diversity. Teachers need to choose materials that

are relevant to children's lives and provide concrete learning experiences through play. Furthermore, the use of a variety of learning media, such as educational games, picture books, concrete objects, interactive digital media, songs, sensory play, and exploratory activities, can help all children participate in the learning process according to their characteristics. A differentiated learning approach is also an important part of the planning stage because it allows teachers to provide a variety of learning activities tailored to students' readiness and interests. According to Tomlinson (2021), learning differentiation is an effective strategy for meeting the diverse learning needs of students without compromising the desired learning objectives. Therefore, the successful implementation of an inclusive curriculum is greatly influenced by the quality of teachers' learning strategy planning.

Inclusive curriculum planning also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools, families, and professionals. Teachers need information from parents about their children's habits, abilities, interests, and development within the family environment so that the learning program they design is more tailored to the students' needs. In certain circumstances, teachers can also collaborate with psychologists, therapists, special education teachers, or health professionals to obtain recommendations on appropriate services for children who require special support. This collaboration allows for continuity between stimulation provided at school and at home, allowing for more comprehensive monitoring of children's development. Various studies have shown that parental involvement in the learning planning process can increase children's motivation to learn, self-confidence, and success in school activities. Therefore, inclusive curriculum planning should be developed through open and collaborative communication with all parties involved in a child's education.

Based on the synthesis of various theories and previous research, it is clear that inclusive curriculum planning is the primary foundation for providing friendly and meaningful education in early childhood education (PAUD). Planning that begins with identifying student needs, developing flexible learning objectives, selecting differentiated learning strategies, using accessible media, and collaborating with parents and professionals will result in a more effective learning process. Comprehensive planning also helps teachers anticipate various learning barriers so that every child has an equal opportunity to actively participate in learning activities. Therefore, the quality of inclusive curriculum management is largely determined by the quality of the planning process. The better the planning, the greater the opportunity to create a learning environment that optimizes all aspects of child development in a fair, inclusive, and sustainable manner.

4. CONCLUSION

Inclusive curriculum management in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a systematic curriculum management process designed through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating functions to meet the learning needs of all students without discrimination. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of inclusive curriculum management is not only oriented towards achieving learning objectives, but also on providing educational services that respect the diversity of characteristics, abilities, interests, and needs of each child. Curriculum planning based on the identification of student needs, the implementation of differentiated learning, the use of accessible learning media, and authentic assessment are key components in creating friendly, meaningful, and child-centered learning.

The results of this study imply that strengthening inclusive curriculum management needs to be a priority in developing the quality of early childhood education (PAUD) in Indonesia. Implementing an adaptive curriculum not only improves learning quality but also supports the realization of equitable education oriented toward the optimal development of each child. Therefore, a commitment from all stakeholders is needed to improve educator capacity, strengthen inclusive education policies, and develop innovative learning practices so that PAUD services can meet the increasingly diverse needs of students.

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