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The Principal's Role in Implementing Inclusive Education through a Managerial Supervision Approach for Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

This study aimed to: (1) describe the implementation of the principal's managerial supervision in implementing inclusive education for elementary school teachers; (2) improve teachers' ability to implement inclusive education through the principal's managerial supervision approach; and (3) determine the effectiveness of the principal's managerial supervision in improving teachers' ability to implement inclusive education at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan. This study was motivated by the limited understanding and competence of teachers in implementing inclusive education, particularly in developing adaptive lesson plans, applying differentiated instruction, managing inclusive classrooms, and conducting assessments based on students' learning needs. This study employed a School Action Research (SAR) design conducted in two cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II. Each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were eight teachers at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research instruments included an observation checklist for the implementation of inclusive education, interview guidelines, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed using percentages and mean scores, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the principal's managerial supervision effectively improved teachers' ability to implement inclusive education. The average score increased from 65.94 in the initial condition (Fair category) to 78.13 in Cycle I (Good category) and further increased to 87.81 in Cycle II (Very Good category). The interview findings also indicated that teachers had a better understanding of the concept of inclusive education, were able to develop adaptive lesson plans, implement differentiated instruction, manage inclusive classrooms, and conduct assessments according to students' learning needs. Therefore, the principal's managerial supervision proved to be effective in

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improving the implementation of inclusive education at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan.

Keywords: Managerial Supervision, Principal, Inclusive Education, Elementary School Teachers, School Action Research.

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the inclusive education system acts as a crucial method in realizing the equitable distribution of education so that all students receive balanced learning opportunities. This educational model requires school institutions to accommodate variations in student conditions and provide instructional assistance relevant to the needs of each individual. The inclusion paradigm is a strategy that ensures all students study collectively in a school ecosystem that appreciates differences and modifies the curriculum, teaching techniques, and learning facilities to meet the needs of all students (UNESCO 2020). Inclusive education is based on the recognition of student uniqueness, which demands high appreciation in instructional activities (Mitchell, 2014). This concept focuses on efforts to build a fair and equal social order within the scope of a pluralistic society (Arifin, 2017).

However, the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools still encounters various real obstacles. These problems include the limited competence of educators, lack of infrastructure, unsupportive school policies, and the weak supervisory function of school leaders (Budiyanto, 2017). Literature reviews also found various obstacles related to the lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, such as limited adaptive learning media and building accessibility (Jogbakci., et al, 2025). Facts in the field prove that many teachers have not mastered sufficient competencies to implement inclusive education, which causes educational services for students with diverse learning needs to be less effective (Alfian., et al, 2025). Teachers face difficulties in providing precise services and have not been able to direct students according to their specific needs (Firli et al, 2020). The attitude of teachers in the classroom towards students with special needs is still recorded in the poor category; educators have not shown empathy towards children with special needs, so the creation of a conducive learning environment has not been maximally realized (Udhiyanasari, 2019).

The principal plays a role as an instructional leader who is fully responsible for organizing school assets through the comprehensive application of managerial and supervisory functions (Prasojo and Sudiyono 2011). The principal carries a substantial mandate to coordinate the educational institution by gathering, optimizing, and mobilizing every existing potential to achieve

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organizational targets (Sagala, 2010: 88). As a learning leader, the principal is obliged to form a school culture that encourages the improvement of education quality and supports inclusivity (Mulyasa 2022). Various research shows that the effectiveness of inclusive education heavily depends on the principal's managerial skills in designing programs, creating an inclusive atmosphere, conducting supervision, and building strategic partnerships (Sunardi et al. 2011). The reliability of the principal's managerial competence has a positive impact on the skills of educators in designing and executing inclusive school programs (Minsih and D 2018). Mulyasa (2013) emphasizes that the principal's position as a supervisor is very crucial in strengthening teacher professionalism through intensive assistance.

The explanation in the Principal's Workbook (Kemendiknas, 2011: 7-10) emphasizes that the supervisor's obligations include plan formulation, program execution, and the utilization of evaluation data. This coaching activity aims to support teachers in honing learning management skills and providing quality educational services (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2013). Therefore, the use of an effective managerial supervision approach is highly urgent so that teachers are able to accommodate all forms of student diversity excellently. This research has significant value in analyzing the concrete contribution of the principal in implementing inclusive education practices through the managerial supervision function (Wahjosumidjo, 2010:83).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a School Action Research (SAR) design to improve and enhance school management practices through concrete actions taken by the principal. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan, located in Pujungan District, Malinau Regency, North Kalimantan Province, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from February to April 2026. The subjects of this study were eight educators, consisting of class teachers and subject teachers, who are directly involved in the learning process but have not fully understood the optimal implementation of inclusive education and require mentoring through managerial supervision.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Subjects

No	Characteristics	Total
1	Male Teachers	3
2	Female Teachers	5
3	Total Teachers	8

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4	ASN (Civil Servant) Status	6
5	PPPK/Honorary Status	2

The study utilized the Kemmis and McTaggart (2014) model framework, which includes four systematic stages in each cycle: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was carried out in two cycles, where the reflection data from the first cycle served as the basis for revisions in the subsequent stage until the success parameters were achieved. The planning stage involved developing managerial supervision programs, observation instruments, and reflection formats. The acting stage included the socialization of inclusive education concepts, teacher coaching, mentoring in inclusive lesson plan development, and learning supervision.

Data were collected using observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. Observations directly monitored the implementation of managerial supervision and the teachers' skills in applying inclusive education principles using standardized supervision and implementation checklists. Interviews were conducted to explore the teachers' understanding, obstacles in implementing inclusive education, and their perceptions of the principal's managerial supervision. Documentation gathered authentic records, including supervision programs, coaching modules, teacher lesson plans, visual documentation, and supervision result recaps.

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative descriptive techniques. Quantitative data, in the form of observation scores, were analyzed using percentages and mean formulas to measure teacher competency levels. Qualitative data from interviews and documentation were analyzed through data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and data verification. The research actions were considered successful if 85% or more of the educators achieved the "Good" or "Very Good" category, the average score reached a minimum of 80, and the observational results showed a consistent increase from the initial condition to Cycle I, and from Cycle I to Cycle II.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Initial Condition

The implementation of this school action research took place at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, involving eight educators as the primary research subjects. Initial observations revealed that the majority of teachers had not deeply mastered the principles of inclusive education. Educators faced significant obstacles in identifying the special needs of each student, designing flexible teaching modules, implementing

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differentiated instruction techniques, and aligning learning assessments with the unique profiles of the students.

Cycle I and Cycle II Implementation

During Cycle I, actions included the socialization of inclusive education concepts, teacher coaching regarding student characteristics, mentoring in developing inclusive lesson plans, and learning supervision. Observation results in Cycle I showed an increase in teacher capacity, although reflection indicated that some teachers still struggled to apply differentiated instruction and were not yet optimal in conducting assessments for students with special needs, requiring more intensive supervision. Consequently, Cycle II actions involved intensive mentoring, individual supervision for teachers facing difficulties, reinforcement of differentiated learning practices, and peer sharing sessions.

Improvement in Teacher Competence

The observational data demonstrated a continuous escalation in teacher competence across the stages. The average score for teacher capability in implementing inclusive education was 65.94 (Fair category) in the initial condition. Following the Cycle I intervention, the average score rose to 78.13 (Good category). Upon the completion of Cycle II, the average score surged to 87.81 (Very Good category). All eight teachers successfully achieved either the Good or Very Good classification, thereby optimally meeting the research success targets.

Table 2. Comparison of Research Results

No	Teacher Name	Initial Condition	Cycle I	Cycle II
1	Teacher 1	60.00	75.00	85.00
2	Teacher 2	65.00	77.50	87.50
3	Teacher 3	62.50	75.00	85.00
4	Teacher 4	70.00	80.00	90.00
5	Teacher 5	67.50	77.50	87.50
6	Teacher 6	65.00	77.50	87.50
7	Teacher 7	67.50	80.00	90.00
8	Teacher 8	70.00	82.50	90.00
Average		**65.94**	**78.13**	**87.81**

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Interview Findings

Interviews conducted comprehensively across the cycles corroborated the observational data, evidencing a stable and continuous progression. Initially, teachers lacked mastery over inclusive education concepts, hindering their ability to map learning needs, compile adaptive instruments, execute differentiated methods, and conduct assessments. The managerial supervision intervention in Cycle I prompted teachers to absorb the inclusive education concepts and practice the guidance outcomes in the classroom, although they continued to require additional direction in specific aspects. By the conclusion of Cycle II, all educators confirmed that the managerial supervision program yielded a tangible positive impact on their mastery of inclusive education implementation. The teachers expressed high self-confidence in mapping student learning needs, designing adaptive instructional instruments, executing differentiated learning methods, and organizing evaluations aligned with the unique profiles of every student.

Discussion

The research findings substantiate that the execution of managerial supervision by the principal effectively elevates educator competence in applying the inclusive education system. The data recorded that the average capability score jumped from 65.94 (Fair) in the initial phase to 78.13 post-Cycle I, and eventually increased to reach 87.81 during Cycle II.

Initial observational and interview data exposed that the majority of teachers had not grasped the essence of inclusive education, which triggered barriers in mapping student learning needs, designing adaptive curricula, and executing differentiated instruction. This phenomenon underscores that educators' capacity to comprehend inclusivity principles required significant reinforcement. These outcomes align with the view of Sukinah (2010), which positions inclusive education as a multicultural-based practice aimed at encouraging students to recognize and respect diversity in ethnicity, culture, values, character, as well as physical and psychological conditions. Therefore, teachers are obligated to transcend theoretical understanding by actualizing tangible learning services that uphold student heterogeneity.

The positive trend validates that managerial supervision contributes massively to teacher proficiency. Educators are now more adept at mastering inclusive concepts, assembling teaching instruments, executing differentiated learning, and managing evaluations accurately. This study reinforces the assertion by Mulyasa (2022) that the principal's role as a manager encompasses the responsibility of guiding teachers through supervision, a strategic step proven capable of escalating the quality standards of learning in schools.

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The research findings strengthen the proposition by Yusuf et al. (2014) stating that the effectiveness of inclusive education governance can optimize school leadership and teacher performance, which significantly impacts the standard of educational service delivery for all students. Additionally, these data support previous studies by Mayasari, Karlimah, and Mulyadi (2024), indicating that the principal's managerial proficiency triggers an enhancement in teacher competence to design and implement inclusive education systems.

The managerial supervision process, functioning systematically through planning, action, observation, and evaluation phases, proved successful in honing teacher skills. Educators acquired opportunities to engage in discussions, receive constructive criticism, and implement consistent improvements. Consequently, schools can rely on managerial supervision as a key strategy in optimizing the implementation of inclusive education at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan.

CONCLUSION

The principal holds a highly crucial position in ensuring the success of the inclusion program by exercising authority as a manager and supervisor to guide and facilitate teachers in providing equitable educational services. The consistent implementation of managerial supervision—running in an organized manner through the phases of planning, concrete action, monitoring, and self-evaluation—has proven effective in optimizing teachers' proficiency in managing inclusive classrooms. This supervisory component involves coaching activities, classroom assistance, providing educational feedback, and measured follow-up steps on teacher performance to overcome various obstacles, such as variations in teacher understanding, lack of experience in differentiated instruction methods, and limited supporting facilities. The school overcame these constraints through continuous supervision schemes, personal guidance, internal workshops, and the strengthening of synergy among educators, alongside formulating internal regulations and fostering a school culture that appreciates differences.

Research findings over two cycles confirm that the principal's managerial approach is highly effective in improving the quality of inclusive teaching at SD Negeri 008 Pujungan. Statistics indicate an increase in the teachers' average score from 65.94 (Fair category) in the initial stage to 78.13 (Good category) in Cycle I, which continued to strengthen until reaching 87.81 (Very Good category) in Cycle II. This total growth of 21.87 points, or 33.16 percent, signifies that the research success indicators have been optimally fulfilled. Ultimately, this research proves that planned and continuous managerial supervision is capable of significantly improving teacher competence in implementing the inclusive education system.

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