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School Strategy Management in Optimizing Inclusive Education in Public Schools (Descriptive Study at SMKN 1 Palasah and SMPN 2 Dawuan)

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Abstract: This study discusses school strategic management in optimizing inclusive education in public schools, with case studies at SMKN 1 Palasah and SMPN 2 Dawuan, Majalengka Regency. The background of this research is the need for appropriate strategies so that students with special needs receive fair and suitable educational services. The purpose of this study is to identify how schools plan, implement, and evaluate inclusive strategies, and to compare their impact on school culture. This research applied a qualitative descriptive method with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings show that both schools are committed to inclusive education, but differ in readiness and implementation. SMKN 1 Palasah tends to apply simple and situational adjustments, while SMPN 2 Dawuan implements a more systematic process including assessment, situation analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and monitoring. The impact at SMKN 1 Palasah is limited to improving student independence, while SMPN 2 Dawuan shows broader impacts on academic and social development as well as the creation of a more inclusive school culture. The conclusion emphasizes that well-planned strategies, facilities, teacher competence, and collaboration with parents and stakeholders are key to inclusive education success. Schools are recommended to develop clearer strategies, establish special inclusion teams, provide teacher training, and conduct regular evaluations to ensure effective and sustainable inclusive practices.
Keywords: Strategic Management, Inclusive Education, Public Schools.

Inclusive education is a strategic issue in fulfilling the right to education for all citizens, especially children with special needs (ABK), who still face serious obstacles in access and quality of education services, especially at the Vocational High School (SMK) level. This is empirical evidence that inclusive programs in vocational schools still require the support of understanding and readiness of school stakeholders (Nurwahyuliningsih & Ramdani, 2024). Legally, this right has been guaranteed in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and strengthened through Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 70 of 2009, and is in line with the global commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goal four on inclusive and equitable education. The learning outcomes of ABK in vocational schools from an assessment perspective strengthen the findings regarding the lack of teacher competency in specific assessments for ABK (Hutapea, 2024). However, various findings in the field indicate that the implementation of inclusive education in vocational schools (SMK)

is less than optimal due to limited teacher competency in handling children with special needs, a lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, and poor synergy between schools, the community, and stakeholders. This is relevant to highlight the gaps in the implementation of contextual inclusive education in vocational schools and the challenges faced by vocational classes for children with special needs (Ardiani & Yoenanto, 2024).

The role of vocational schools in improving teacher competency for inclusive education for children with special needs is a crucial aspect that is often overlooked in previous studies and has become a barrier to inclusive implementation (Juhairiah et al., 2024). Previous research has generally focused on three main aspects: inclusive education policies and regulations, teacher readiness and competency, and school facilities and environmental constraints, which have largely focused on primary and secondary education levels (Suvita et al., 2022). Therefore, there remains a research gap regarding how contextual and sustainable inclusive education management strategies can be effectively implemented in vocational schools, which have specific curriculum characteristics and expertise. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and formulate an inclusive education management model that can ensure the fulfillment of the educational rights of children with special needs in vocational schools (Stufflebeam, 2003).

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia requires a strategic role for school management in managing all available resources to create a welcoming learning environment for all students, including children with special needs (ABK). In practice, managerial functions such as planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating are essential foundations for ensuring the effectiveness of inclusive policies and programs ecosystem (Nusaibah et al., 2025). Principal leadership, teacher competence, support from special education staff, and collaboration with parents and the community play a significant role in shaping an inclusive school (Terry, 2005). However, the implementation of inclusive education in various regions still faces structural and cultural obstacles, such as limited facilities, inadequate teacher training, and minimal community support, indicating a gap between national policy and the reality on the ground.

Academic studies on school management have extensively discussed strategies for improving educational quality in general. Several studies, such as Qurtubi et al. (2023), emphasize strategic management in improving educational quality, while Kartika et al. (2019) and Sari (2019) focus more on strategic management to build competitive advantage in educational institutions, particularly in higher education. Other studies also demonstrate the contribution of strategic management to the effectiveness of infrastructure and the creation of a conducive school culture (Saparwadi, 2021). However, most of these studies have not specifically examined how school strategic management at the junior high and vocational high school levels is directed toward optimizing the implementation of inclusive education, resulting in inclusion remaining a relatively marginalized topic in the educational management literature.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze how school strategic management is implemented to optimize inclusive education at SMKN 1 Palasah Majalengka and SMPN 2 Dawuan Majalengka Regency. These two schools were selected because they demonstrate institutional commitment to developing inclusive education services while simultaneously facing unique challenges as public schools with diverse student populations (Jogbakci et al., 2023). This research is expected to provide an empirical overview of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school management strategies to support inclusive education at the secondary education level (Kurniawati, 2023).

This research is based on the argument that the implementation of planned, sustainable, and contextual strategic management has a significant impact on the success of inclusive education in schools. In line with Fahmi's view (2014), which emphasizes strategic management as a series of long-term decisions to achieve organizational excellence, schools with mature strategic planning are believed to be better prepared to face the challenges of inclusivity. Therefore, this study proposes that effective school strategic management—through clear planning, adaptive implementation, and ongoing evaluation—can optimize the implementation of inclusive education and create a fair and non-discriminatory learning environment for all students.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives, which seek to deeply understand phenomena in natural settings (Nurcahya et al., 2024). According to Sugiyono (2017:9), qualitative research is a research method based on post-positivism philosophy, used to conduct research in natural settings. The researcher serves as the key instrument, triangulation is used for data collection, inductive analysis, and the research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. The descriptive method was used to describe in detail the school's strategic management process for optimizing inclusive education. Sugiyono (2018:29) emphasized that the descriptive method is used to describe or analyze research results, but is not used to draw broader conclusions.

This research was conducted at SMKN 1 Palasah, Jl. Raya Palimanan Jatiwangi Km 05, Palasah District, Majalengka Regency, and SMPN 2 Dawuan, Jl. Raya Utara, Gandu Village, Dawuan District, Majalengka Regency. The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Subjects included school supervisors, principals, guidance counselors, special assistance teachers (GPK), student affairs teachers, and school committee members (David et al., 2020). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, selecting informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus, followed by snowball sampling to obtain more comprehensive information.

Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were

analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model as cited in Sugiyono (2017:246), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure data validity, source triangulation was used. Sugiyono (2015:373) explains that source triangulation involves comparing and cross-checking the reliability of information obtained through different time periods, techniques, and sources in qualitative research. Thus, comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation produces data that is more credible, valid, and accountable (Bestliyanti et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Research on school strategic management in optimizing inclusive education at SMKN 1 Palasah and SMPN 2 Dawuan revealed differences in approach at each stage of the strategic management process. During the initial assessment, the two schools differed in their understanding of inclusive education readiness. At SMKN 1 Palasah, the school's vision and mission did not explicitly reflect inclusive values, placing greater emphasis on academic achievement, skills, and general character development. Nevertheless, inclusive education practices were implemented through adjustments to learning services to meet the needs of students with special needs. The principal's statement affirmed:

> *"Our school does not include the word 'inclusion' in its vision and mission, but in practice, we still strive to provide educational services for all students, including those with special needs."*

In contrast, SMPN 2 Dawuan asserted that its vision and mission implicitly supported inclusion, even though the term 'inclusive' was not explicitly stated. The Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher at SMKN 1 Palasah is also actively involved in the initial assessment through assessments, observations, and the development of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). The teacher stated:

> *"We usually complete the assessment instruments and discuss them with the BK teacher to develop the ILPs. So, we're involved from the beginning."*

However, classroom teacher involvement in the initial stages is relatively limited, as assessments are mostly conducted by special assistant teachers or a specific team. Differences in assessment focus are also evident, with SMKN 1 Palasah emphasizing school readiness, while SMPN 2 Dawuan focuses more on the conditions and needs of students with special needs.

During the situational analysis stage, differences in approach between the schools become even more apparent. SMKN 1 Palasah tends to conduct situational analyses incidentally, especially when prospective students with special needs enroll. The principal explained that the analysis is conducted by reviewing the curriculum, student needs, and the school's SWOT analysis.

> *"We usually assess teacher strengths, facilities, and parental support simply; there's no regular*

schedule yet."

In contrast, SMPN 2 Dawuan implemented a more systematic and planned situational analysis, particularly leading up to the start of the new school year. This analysis encompassed student aspects, teacher competency, facilities and infrastructure, as well as parental and community support. Internally, SMKN 1 Palasah examined teacher competency, classroom facilities, learning media, and the structure of the inclusion team, while SMPN 2 Dawuan focused more on teachers' experience in dealing with students with special needs. External factors also played a role, with parental and community support at SMKN 1 Palasah being relatively good, while at SMPN 2 Dawuan, some community members still needed further understanding of inclusive education.

The strategy formulation and implementation stages demonstrated differences in managerial maturity. SMKN 1 Palasah did not yet have a formal strategic program specifically addressing inclusive education. The strategies implemented were ad-hoc and evolved based on daily needs, such as adapting materials and learning methods to suit student needs. The principal stated that the inclusion strategy was formulated based on teacher experience and classroom dynamics without the support of a written planning document. In contrast, SMPN 2 Dawuan has developed a more systematic strategy through the involvement of guidance counselors, the use of academic documents, and regular coordination meetings. The main program implemented is inclusive learning in regular classes with the support of guidance counselors. In the implementation phase, SMKN 1 Palasah implemented the strategy through material adaptation, the use of concrete media, providing additional time, and the preparation of lesson plans (RPI), but monitoring of its implementation remains informal. Meanwhile, SMPN 2 Dawuan implemented question adaptation, adjusted learning times, and guidance counselors with a more structured monitoring system through principal supervision and evaluation meetings, despite still facing the challenge of a large student population.

In the monitoring and impact phase of strategy implementation, differences between the two schools became increasingly apparent. SMKN 1 Palasah conducted spontaneous monitoring through direct observation and briefings when issues arose, without scheduled supervision or written reports. As a result, the impact of the inclusion strategy on school culture remained limited and unevenly distributed among teachers. In contrast, SMPN 2 Dawuan implemented a more systematic monitoring system through routine classroom supervision, periodic evaluations, and follow-up meetings. This approach has resulted in the formation of a more inclusive school culture, characterized by increased mutual respect among students, collaboration between teachers, and parental involvement in supporting inclusive education. Indicators of success at SMPN 2 Dawuan are also clearer, encompassing students' academic, social, and emotional aspects. Overall, the research findings indicate that SMKN 1 Palasah is still in the practical adaptation phase, while SMPN 2 Dawuan has moved toward a more structured and sustainable

inclusive education management system.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the strategic management theory proposed by Pahlevi & Musa (2023)that the strategic planning process includes five main stages: initial assessment, situation analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. These stages also align with the views of David, Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, Rothaermel, and Thompson and Martin, who emphasize the importance of a systematic, participatory, and data-driven approach to educational strategic management. In general, both schools have implemented the initial assessment, situation analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and monitoring processes, although the depth and consistency vary. SMKN 1 Palasah tends to implement inclusion strategies adaptively and practically, while SMPN 2 Dawuan has moved towards a more structured and sustainable strategic management pattern.

In the initial assessment stage, the findings at SMKN 1 Palasah, which emphasizes school readiness, differ from those at SMPN 2 Dawuan, which places greater emphasis on student conditions. This aligns with Stufflebeam's theory regarding the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) which emphasizes that educational program planning must consider both context (institutional readiness) and input (student conditions). This difference also indicates varying strategic orientations: one focuses on institutional readiness, and the other focuses on individual needs. This variation in orientation indicates that inclusion strategies are heavily influenced by how schools interpret planning priorities, both in terms of the institutional context and individual student characteristics. This aligns with the principles of educational program evaluation, which emphasize the importance of balancing institutional context and student input.

In the situational analysis, SMPN 2 Dawuan conducted a more systematic analysis, in line with Wheelen & Hunger's (2018) view that a good strategy must begin with environmental scanning, both internally and externally. Meanwhile, an incidental analysis at SMKN 1 Palasah revealed limitations in practice that could impact the school's inability to anticipate long-term challenges. In terms of strategy formulation, the results indicate that SMKN 1 Palasah tends to be practical and adaptive, while SMPN 2 Dawuan is more systematic. This can be compared with research by Fitriani (2020), which found that schools with formal strategic planning tended to be more successful in implementing inclusion programs than schools that relied solely on teacher improvisation. This finding confirms previous research, which found that schools with strategic documents and clear coordination mechanisms were more effective in implementing inclusive education (Nurcahya et al., 2025). The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis that the success of an inclusion strategy is determined not only by normative commitment but also by the consistency of the strategic management process at each stage.

The implementation phase in both schools demonstrated adaptation, but differed in the monitoring

structure. This reinforces Fullan's (2007) theory on educational change, which emphasizes that implementation requires leadership, system support, and ongoing monitoring. When monitoring is only informal, as at SMKN 1 Palasah, program sustainability is difficult to ensure. This demonstrates that systematic strategic management contributes directly to the formation of an inclusive school culture. SMPN 2 Dawuan is beginning to demonstrate changes in the values and behavior of the school community, leading to greater respect for diversity, while SMKN 1 Palasah is still in the early stages of internalizing inclusive values. This confirms that school culture is not formed instantly, but rather through strategic practices that are carried out consistently and sustainably.

The findings from the strategy monitoring also highlight differences in system readiness. SMPN 2 Dawuan, which conducts regular classroom supervision and evaluations, reflects the principle of continuous improvement in quality management, while SMKN 1 Palasah still focuses on ad-hoc solutions. This finding is consistent with Arifin's (2021) research, which shows that routine supervision improves the consistency of teachers' inclusive practices. The impact of strategy implementation shows that SMPN 2 Dawuan has begun to establish an inclusive school culture, while SMKN 1 Palasah has not yet achieved significant results. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture is formed through consistently implemented values, beliefs, and habits. SMPN 2 Dawuan, which implemented a more structured strategy, has succeeded in gradually instilling inclusive values, while SMKN 1 Palasah is still in the early stages.

Critically, these differences in results indicate that provincial or district-level policies have not yet fully oriented schools towards a uniform pattern. The contextualization of strategies is heavily influenced by internal factors (teacher competence, principal leadership, facilities) and external factors (community support, regulations, and parental participation). On the one hand, an adaptive approach provides teachers with flexibility in responding quickly to student needs. However, on the other hand, the absence of a formal monitoring and evaluation system has the potential to weaken program sustainability and hinder the development of a strong inclusive culture. Conversely, a more structured strategy allows for consistent implementation, despite challenges such as limited resources and teacher workload.

Based on these findings, policy implications include the need to strengthen institutional support for schools, particularly through ongoing teacher training, the development of formal inclusion strategy management documents, and the formation of inclusion teams with clear roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, a planned monitoring and evaluation system is needed to ensure that inclusion strategies do not remain merely momentary practices but are truly internalized within the school culture. Thus, this study confirms that the successful management of inclusive education strategies depends heavily on systematic, data-driven, participatory, and long-term implementation. Without such an approach, inclusion strategies risk becoming merely pragmatic responses with limited and unsustainable impact.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSION

This study provides a key lesson that the success of implementing inclusive education at the secondary education level depends heavily on the quality of school strategic management, which is implemented systematically, consistently, and sustainably. The findings indicate differences in the level of managerial maturity between SMKN 1 Palasah and SMPN 2 Dawuan in each stage of strategic management, from initial assessment, situation analysis, formulation, implementation, and monitoring of inclusion strategies. Schools with more structured planning, systematic situation analysis, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms tend to be more successful in building an inclusive school culture and responding comprehensively to the needs of students with special needs. The scientific contribution of this study lies in strengthening the perspective of strategic management of inclusive education at the junior high and vocational high school levels, which has received relatively little attention in the literature. It also emphasizes that the success of inclusion is determined not only by normative commitment and policies, but also by the consistency of the managerial process at each stage.

SUGGESTION

However, this study has several limitations. The study's scope, which included only two public schools in one district, limits the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts, including private schools and regions with different social and policy characteristics. Furthermore, this study focused on a descriptive qualitative approach, thus failing to quantitatively measure the impact of management strategies on the learning outcomes or social-emotional development of children with special needs. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more schools in diverse contexts, use a mixed methods approach, and explore in more depth the relationship between management strategies, school culture, and learning outcomes for children with special needs to obtain a more comprehensive and applicable picture for developing inclusive education policies.

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