Collaborative Management Between Parents and Teachers to Create an Inclusive School

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education provides learning opportunities for all children, including those with special needs, within the same environment. This study aims to analyze the collaborative management between parents and teachers in creating an inclusive school at Cahaya Meral Private Junior High School, as well as to identify the challenges and strategies to address them. A mixed methods approach was used by combining quantitative data from questionnaires distributed to 5 parents and 4 teachers, and qualitative data from observations and in-depth interviews. The results show that the implementation of inclusive education at Cahaya Meral Private Junior High School still faces several obstacles, such as limited facilities and infrastructure, lack of training for educators, and delays in identifying the needs of students with special needs. Nevertheless, the synergy between teachers and parents has contributed positively to the development of these children. The principal plays a crucial role in providing training and resources necessary to foster an inclusive learning environment. To enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education, continuous teacher training and the provision of adequate facilities, such as therapy rooms and learning aids, are required. Strong communication and cooperation among all stakeholders are also essential. These findings are expected to serve as a reference in formulating more optimal inclusive education policies, so that every child can access equitable and quality education.

Keywords: inclusive education, educational management, educators, collaborative model

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in Indonesia, as mandated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation (Permendikbudristek) Number 48 of 2023, constitutes a strategic effort to ensure equitable access to education for all learners, including those with disabilities. Despite the existence of such regulatory frameworks, the practical implementation of inclusive principles across educational institutions continues to face considerable challenges. Many schools have yet to fully provide appropriate accommodations, including the adaptation of instructional methods, the establishment of disability-friendly physical environments, and the development of fair and responsive assessment systems. This lack of readiness has often resulted in the marginalization of students with disabilities, thereby limiting their full participation in the educational process and impeding the broader goals of inclusive education[1].

The main issues faced include the lack of adequate facilities and the limited training provided to educators in implementing inclusive teaching strategies. In addition, many schools have yet to establish a Disability Services Unit (DSU) as a support center to provide necessary assistance and learning aids[2].

As a solution, this regulation mandates that every educational institution provide reasonable accommodations and establish a Disability Services Unit (DSU). The policy also underscores the importance of enhancing the competencies of educators and education personnel in implementing inclusive teaching strategies that are responsive to the individual needs of learners. Through these measures, inclusive education is expected to be effectively implemented, ensuring equal access to education for all children, including those with special needs.

In general, inclusive education is understood as an effort to integrate children with special needs into mainstream schools, with the aim of ensuring equal rights to education, expanding learning opportunities, and reducing discriminatory practices.[3]. Nevertheless, the reality in the field reveals that many teachers still lack an open and responsive attitude toward student diversity. This often leads to complaints from parents and makes students with special needs more vulnerable to discriminatory treatment and bullying. In his study, Bashir[4]highlights the critical role of school and community support in fostering a more open and inclusive educational environment. Therefore, improving teachers' understanding and competencies regarding inclusive education has become an urgent

priority, so that all children can experience the learning process in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

Although inclusive education is founded on a strong vision—embracing all children regardless of their differences and special needs, supported by special educators, individual learning plans, and the freedom for teachers to design creative and innovative instruction—its implementation on the ground continues to face significant challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of synergy among sectors, including the limited involvement of professionals and institutions with strategic roles in sustaining inclusive education[5]. Moreover, parental involvement, which should serve as a key determinant in the success of inclusive practices, remains suboptimal. Several studies have demonstrated that a strong relationship between teachers and parents plays a vital role in supporting the adaptation and learning processes of children with special needs[6]. When communication between home and school functions effectively, the specific needs of students can be more swiftly identified and addressed. Therefore, a successful inclusive education strategy must incorporate active collaboration among teachers, parents, and the wider community to ensure the equitable delivery of education[7].

Inclusive education also represents a system that seeks to accommodate the diverse individual needs of learners—including children with disabilities—through flexible and adaptive approaches. As noted by scholars, inclusive education can address various learning styles and individual requirements by adapting curricula and instructional methods, though it demands more intensive teacher training to ensure true flexibility and responsiveness[8].

In alignment with this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation (Permendikbudristek) Number 48 of 2023 reinforces the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia by mandating that all educational institutions provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. These include adjustments in teaching methods, physical environments, and assessment systems to enable full participation without discrimination. Furthermore, the regulation highlights the importance of enhancing the competencies of educators and educational personnel in applying inclusive teaching strategies that are responsive to the unique needs of individual learners [9].

The novelty of this research lies in its in-depth exploration of collaborative dynamics within an inclusive school environment, particularly focusing on the interaction between students with special needs and their peers in mainstream settings. Preliminary observations at the research locus revealed that the school had already enrolled several students with special needs prior to its official designation as an inclusive school by the local Department of Education. Following this designation, the school formally implemented an inclusive education program and initiated a collaborative approach involving teacher training, parental engagement, and the formation of peer support groups for students with special needs.

Despite existing limitations in infrastructure—such as the absence of therapy rooms and limited access to assistive learning tools—the school has demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive practices through the development of long-term planning and the gradual allocation of financial resources. This study contributes novel insights by documenting not only the structural and programmatic aspects of inclusion but also the lived experiences of collaboration, as well as identifying key barriers to implementation. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to explore the realities of collaborative practices and the challenges encountered by Cahaya Meral Private Junior High School in actualizing an inclusive education system.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the collaboration patterns between parents and educators in the implementation of inclusive education. The rationale for adopting this approach lies in its ability to capture both the subjective perceptions of stakeholders (qualitative data) and objective, measurable indicators (quantitative data) to enrich the analysis and interpretation of the research problem [11].

The research design is exploratory-descriptive, aiming to portray the actual practices of collaboration while also identifying the challenges, constraints, and strategies adopted by the inclusive school in its day-to-day implementation. This design aligns with the mixed methods approach, allowing for in-depth exploration of aspects that may not be fully captured through quantitative instruments alone.

The study was conducted at Cahaya Meral Private Junior High School, which has implemented inclusive education since 2019. The research subjects included five students with special needs and five teachers. Data collection involved several techniques:

1. Quantitative data were obtained using structured (closed-ended) questionnaires distributed to parents and school staff.
2. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, direct classroom observations of student interactions, and document analysis of school policies and reports related to inclusive education.

Data analysis was carried out through the following procedures:

a. Quantitative Analysis

Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly by calculating the mean scores of each indicator from both parents and school personnel. The results served to assess perceptions regarding the quality of collaboration and identify perceived obstacles in inclusive practices.

b. Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed using content analysis, focusing on emergent themes such as infrastructure limitations, teacher training needs, parental involvement, and collaborative solutions.

c. Data Triangulation

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation was employed by cross-checking the results from the quantitative questionnaires with qualitative insights. This allowed for a more robust explanation of the barriers and strategies related to collaborative practices in the research setting.

The primary instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher, based on a review of relevant literature and initial field observations. To ensure content validity, the instrument underwent expert judgment by two academic supervisors and one practitioner in inclusive education with relevant expertise [10].Each item in the questionnaire was evaluated across three key dimensions: content relevance, clarity of language, and measurability of indicators. The assessment used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not valid, 5 = highly valid). The feedback from the validators served as the basis for revising and refining the questionnaire before it was used for data collection.

The criteria for item evaluation by the expert validators are presented in **Table 1** below:

Table 1. Item Evaluation Criteria Used by Validators

Score	Category
1	Not valid
2	Less valid
3	Moderately valid
4	Valid
5	Highly valid

Source. Utami, dkk [11]

To analyze the results of this validation, Aiken's V coefficient was calculated to determine the degree of agreement among experts regarding each item in the instrument. The formula for Aiken's V is as follows:

$$V = \frac{\sum s}{n\,(c - 1)}$$

Description:

$s = r - 1$

r = score given by the expert

c = number of response categories

n = number of experts

The Aiken's V value ranges from 0 to 1, with an item considered valid if V ≥ 0.70. The results of the Aiken's V calculation were tabulated and used to determine whether each item should be retained, revised, or eliminated [12].

Data obtained from the teacher and parent respondent questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively by calculating the mean score for each indicator based on respondents' answers. The formula used is:

$$Mean = \frac{Total\ Score\ from\ all\ respondents}{Number\ respondents}$$

Table 2. Reliability Scale

Mean Score Range	Interpretation
4,21 - 5,00	Very High
3,41 – 4,20	High
2,61 – 3,40	Moderate
1,81 – 2,60	Low
1,00 – 1,80	Very Low

Source: Kusmaryono & Wijayanti [13]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on empirical data, it was found that students with special needs (SEN) at the research site were only identified in Grades VII, VIII, and IX. This fact indicates that the presence of SEN students was only recognized at the final levels of junior high school, which may be due to delays in the identification process upon school entry. No SEN students were identified in Grades I through VI, suggesting that the inclusive education program at the school has not been fully optimized—particularly in terms of early detection and the provision of inclusive services for new or lower-grade students.

All identified SEN students exhibited specific learning needs, categorized as Specific Learning Disabilities. These students showed a range of individual challenges such as difficulties in concentration, hyperactivity, shyness, trouble understanding instructions, emotional disturbances, and fine motor skill difficulties.

In response to this condition, teachers at the school have attempted to apply strategies tailored to the

individual characteristics of each student. These strategies include the use of visual media, strategic seating arrangements, extended time for completing tasks, relaxation techniques, motor skills exercises, and the provision of emotional support and motivation. These approaches aim to address learning barriers on an individual level, thereby enabling more effective inclusive education practices and supporting optimal development for each learner.

To strengthen the field findings, the researcher also distributed questionnaires to nine respondents, consisting of five parents of inclusive students and four educational personnel (three teachers and one principal). All respondents were known to have been involved in inclusive education for over a year, indicating relevant experience in building school-family collaboration.

Based on the results of the Aiken's V calculation for all questionnaire items, a V value of 0.75 was obtained, which falls into the "valid" category. In the Aiken's V method, items are considered valid **if** V ≥ 0.70. Therefore, it can be concluded that the questionnaire instrument used in this study is suitable for gathering data on perceptions and collaborative experiences between schools and families in the context of implementing inclusive education at the selected school.
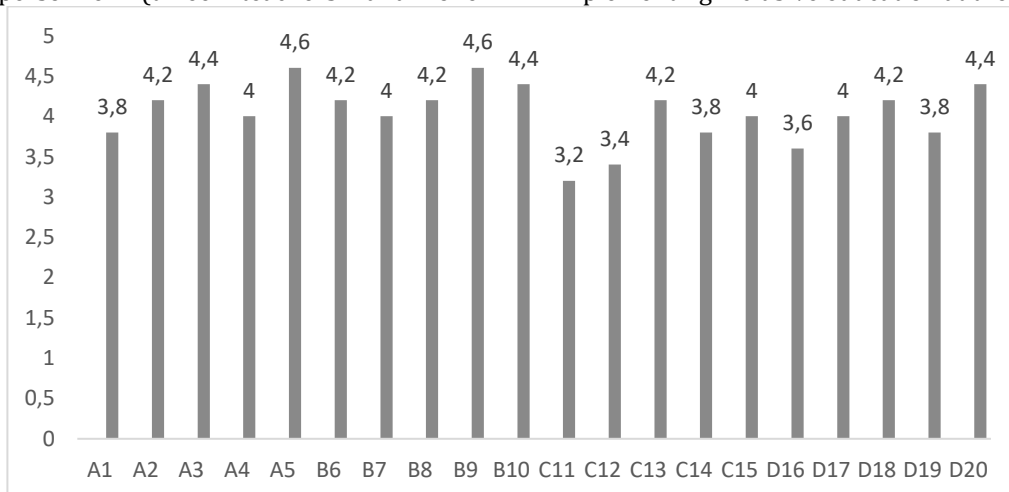
Figure 1. Average Questionnaire Scores – Parent Respondents

Figure 1 illustrates the average scores derived from the questionnaire responses completed by the parents of inclusive education students who participated in this study. The chart shows that most respondents provided scores within the high to very high range, indicating a generally positive perception of the collaboration between schools and parents in supporting the educational process of children with special needs. The highest scores were recorded in the indicators related to communication and active parental involvement, reflecting strong coordination and interaction between teachers and parents. Meanwhile, the lowest-scoring indicators still fell within the moderate category, suggesting room for improvement, particularly in areas such as early information sharing about the child's special needs and sustained parental support. Overall, these findings reinforce the importance of family involvement as a critical factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools.
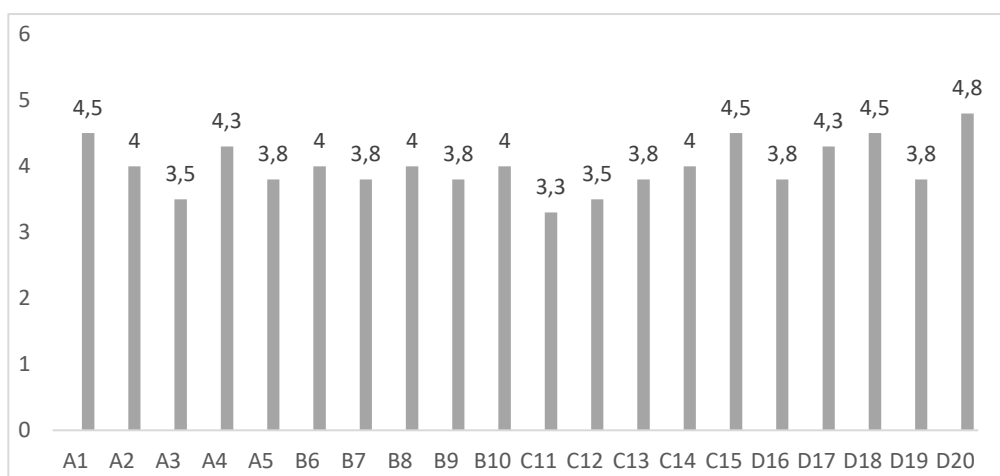
Figure 2. Average Questionnaire Scores – Teacher/Principal Respondents

Figure 2 presents the average scores from the questionnaires completed by teachers and the school principal involved in inclusive education. The data indicates that although collaborative initiatives between schools, teachers, and parents have been initiated, limitations in facilities and resources remain a primary

obstacle to the effective implementation of inclusive education. For instance, the average score of 4.0 for item C15 in Figure 1 (as rated by parents) regarding the availability of facilities supporting student participation, and a score of 3.8 for item A5 in Figure 2 (as rated by teachers) concerning the presence of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for collaboration, reflect that while a foundation for cooperation exists, it is not yet fully supported by adequate infrastructure or specialized learning tools for students with special needs (SEN). This observation is further supported by interview findings, which reveal that therapeutic rooms and assistive learning devices are still lacking.

Additionally, item B10 in Figure 2, related to the early identification and assessment of students' needs, received an average score of 4.0 from both teachers and parents, indicating positive perceptions regarding the flow of information about the needs of inclusive students. However, qualitative analysis from narrative data reveals that several SEN students were only identified after enrollment, highlighting the absence of comprehensive initial assessments. This discrepancy suggests a gap between perceived communication effectiveness and the actual practices in early detection, pointing to the need for strengthening formal procedures for identifying student needs.

The study highlights key challenges in the implementation of inclusive education at SMPS Cahaya Meral, reflecting the real-world complexity of providing equitable learning services for all students, including those with special needs. Two dominant issues emerged from the findings: the limited capacity of teachers and the lack of inclusive learning support facilities. Despite the school's clear commitment to sustaining inclusive programs, these challenges directly affect the quality of instruction and the active participation of SEN students in classroom activities.

A particularly notable finding is the high score of 4.5 for item D18, which reveals that not all teachers have received training in inclusive education. Additionally, a score of 4.2 from parents points to the limited capacity of teachers to effectively handle SEN students. These results underscore an urgent need for ongoing professional development to enhance teachers' pedagogical competencies in applying adaptive strategies. The qualitative data supports this finding, noting that many teachers expressed a lack of confidence in implementing appropriate instructional methods for SEN students. This uncertainty negatively impacts the quality of interaction and the overall learning experience in inclusive classrooms.

This study revealed that collaborative management between teachers and parents at SMPS Cahaya Meral is in a formative but promising stage. The quantitative results indicate high levels of perceived collaboration: parents rated the impact of collaboration on their children's development at 4.6, while teachers gave a 4.5 score in recognizing parents as strategic partners. These findings reflect a growing appreciation of the importance of parent-teacher synergy in the success of inclusive education.

However, qualitative data provided deeper insights into the underlying dynamics of this collaboration. Interviews revealed that while schools have initiated structured communication efforts, such as regular meetings and informal check-ins, there remain critical barriers. For instance, socioeconomic limitations among families often reduce their availability for collaboration activities, and some parents lack an adequate understanding of inclusive education principles. This was evident from moderate scores ranging between 3.6–3.8 for time constraints and 4.0–4.3 for limited parental understanding of inclusion.

The causal relationships behind these findings are multifaceted. First, the absence of comprehensive initial student assessments at the time of enrollment has led to late identification of students with special needs (SEN). This delay hampers the school's ability to prepare early interventions or tailored support strategies. Second, the lack of adequate and sustained teacher training contributes to their reduced confidence and effectiveness in managing diverse learning needs. As emphasized by Az-Zahra et al.[14]teacher readiness in inclusive classrooms is strongly tied to the quality and continuity of professional development they receive. This study reaffirms that claim, showing a clear link between insufficient training and lower preparedness among educators.

Despite these challenges, the research highlights several strengths. The collaborative mindset is present and increasingly formalized within school routines. Teachers and parents have expressed a shared willingness to work together, which is a critical cultural foundation for inclusive education. Moreover, the school's proactive efforts—such as organizing group games and creative competitions for SEN students—indicate emerging inclusive practices beyond mere policy compliance.

These findings are consistent with prior studies, particularly Wulandari[15]who found that active parental involvement enhances the effectiveness of inclusive education, though it is influenced by socioeconomic status and awareness levels. Similarly, this study confirms that while inclusive education frameworks may exist, their success depends heavily on contextual factors such as stakeholder understanding, training quality, and institutional support.

One key contribution of this research lies in its mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative measurements with qualitative narratives. This methodology enabled a more holistic portrayal of inclusive collaboration practices, showing not just how stakeholders perceive inclusion, but also how they experience and enact it in daily school life. However, the study also has limitations. It lacks a longitudinal design that could track the progression of collaboration over time, and it does not directly incorporate the perspectives of SEN students, which would provide valuable insight into the student experience.

From a policy and practice standpoint, the findings suggest several practical implications. First, there is an urgent need for structured early assessment

protocols to identify SEN students upon admission. Second, schools must invest in regular, needs-based training for teachers focused on inclusive strategies. Third, parental education programs should be developed to enhance their understanding of inclusive principles and empower them to engage more effectively. Finally, the allocation of school budgets should prioritize inclusive infrastructure, including therapy spaces and assistive tools.

In conclusion, the inclusive education program at SMPS Cahaya Meral is currently in a transitional phase, evolving from reactive to more adaptive and participatory management. The principal's commitment to adopting adaptive teaching policies, supported by teacher training and incremental infrastructure development, is a progressive step. This study contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education by illustrating how grassroots collaboration, even with limited resources, can drive meaningful inclusion when supported by strong leadership and shared values among stakeholders[16].

The results of the questionnaire distributed to parents of children with special needs (CWSN) indicated a generally positive perception toward the implementation of inclusive education in the research site. As illustrated in Figure 1, the average score across various indicators reflects a strong acknowledgment of the school's efforts to provide inclusive learning. Parents particularly appreciated the school's initiatives in communication, classroom adaptation, emotional support, and the creation of an inclusive environment for their children[17], [18], [19], [20].

This finding supports the idea that collaboration between schools and families plays a central role in realizing effective inclusive education [21]. According to Dyson and Millward, inclusive practices are strengthened when parents feel engaged and informed, contributing to a shared responsibility in supporting students with learning barriers [22]. Furthermore, Florian and Black-Hawkins argue that inclusive education should not only focus on physical access but also emphasize quality interaction and individualized support, which aligns with parental expectations and feedback in this study [23].

However, the data also reveal areas for improvement, particularly in the consistency of individualized services and early detection. As noted by Mittler, effective inclusion must begin with comprehensive early identification strategies and appropriate pedagogical planning [24]. The absence of students with special needs in early grades may indicate a gap in initial screening procedures, which could result in delayed intervention and support[18], [25], [26], [27].

In this context, parental involvement is not limited to supporting their own children but extends to advocating for inclusive culture within the school community. As Ainscow and Miles suggest, building inclusive education requires a cultural transformation that includes the voices of all stakeholders, particularly those most affected by exclusion [28]. The active role of parents, therefore, is instrumental in encouraging

institutional responsiveness and sustainability of inclusive practices.

The findings of this study reveal a distinctive collaborative model between parents and teachers implemented at the research locus. This model is characterized by periodic communication forums, joint program planning, and mutual agreement on supporting students with special needs. The collaborative strategy includes monthly coordination meetings, parent training sessions, and a feedback mechanism through structured questionnaires. Teachers and parents work synergistically not only in identifying student needs but also in designing individual learning programs and providing consistent reinforcement both at school and at home.

This model is aligned with Epstein's framework of school-family partnerships, which emphasizes six key types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community[29]. The local implementation reflects a practical adaptation of these components, particularly in "communicating" and "learning at home", through accessible media such as WhatsApp groups, home visits, and informal parent-teacher meetings[30].

The role of the school's special education team (although not formally structured as a Disability Services Unit) further strengthens the partnership by acting as a liaison and consultant for both parties[31], [32], [33], [34]. This collaborative effort contributes to higher levels of parental engagement, which, according [35], is crucial for the academic and emotional development of children with special needs[36].

Previous studies support the effectiveness of such collaborative models. For instance, research by Sheridan, Ryoo, Garbacz, Kunz, and Chumney highlights the impact of structured parent-teacher collaboration on the social behavior and academic outcomes of students with learning difficulties [37]. Similarly, the work of Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, and Beegle identifies trust, mutual respect, and shared goals as key components in successful home-school partnerships [38].

In this context, the collaboration model observed at the research locus aligns with these theoretical and empirical findings, strengthening the notion that sustained, structured, and mutual collaboration between parents and teachers is indispensable in inclusive educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of inclusive education at SMPS Cahaya Meral is in a transitional phase, striving toward a more adaptive and participatory system. While efforts have been made to accommodate children with special needs (CWSN), significant challenges persist—particularly in terms of limited facilities, inadequate teacher training, and the late identification of student needs. Quantitative findings indicate an average score of 4.0 regarding communication about inclusion needs, suggesting a

positive perception. However, qualitative data highlight that many students with special needs are only identified after enrollment, complicating efforts to provide early and appropriate support.

Despite these challenges, the study found that a collaborative management model involving parents and teachers has begun to emerge and contribute positively to student development. This model is characterized by three main components: (a) structured communication, through scheduled meetings and digital platforms; (b) joint decision-making, involving parents in planning individualized support; and (c) shared responsibility, where both parties actively contribute to learning reinforcement at home and school.Parents reported a high score of 4.6 in terms of the impact of this collaboration on child development, while teachers and school leaders acknowledged the strategic role of parents as educational partners.

The principal plays a critical role in initiating this collaborative framework, including by providing inclusive training programs and facilitating resource allocation. However, the lack of consistent professional development remains an urgent issue, as evidenced by the 4.5 score on the item indicating that not all teachers have received inclusion training. Additionally, the availability of key learning support facilities—such as therapy rooms and assistive devices—remains insufficient, with resource planning still progressing incrementally.

Strong communication and cooperation among all stakeholders, including the local community, are essential for creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment. This research contributes by proposing a school-based collaborative model that strengthens inclusive practice and offers actionable insights for policymakers and educators. By overcoming systemic barriers and reinforcing multi-stakeholder collaboration, inclusive education can be more effectively implemented to support both academic and social growth for all students, especially those with special needs.

Recommendations

To support the successful implementation of inclusive education in the research setting, several key actions are recommended:
1. Continuous Professional Development: It is crucial to provide progressive, ongoing training for teachers to enhance their understanding of special needs and equip them with inclusive teaching strategies. Such training should be designed to build both pedagogical competence and confidence.
2. Early Assessment Systems: Schools should collaborate with child psychologists and special education experts to establish robust early assessment protocols. This will ensure timely identification and intervention for students with special needs.
3. Facility Development: The provision of essential learning support infrastructure—such as therapy rooms, visual aids, and inclusive learning

technologies—must be prioritized. To achieve this, schools are encouraged to form partnerships with local governments and education-focused organizations.
4. Strengthening Collaboration: Active and sustained collaboration between teachers, parents, and the wider community should be institutionalized through regular educational workshops, family learning events, and open dialogue forums. These efforts are expected to build a strong culture of inclusion across all levels of the school ecosystem.

By implementing these recommendations, schools can foster an inclusive environment where every student, regardless of their abilities or needs, has equitable access to quality education.

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