

Analysis of Inclusive Education in the Christian Context

Victoria Henderina Bathun*, Melkias Antonias Manggoa, Wellem Sairwona, Wilson
Rajaguguk, Thomas Penturi

Universitas Kristen Indonesia

Email: victoriabathun58@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is an approach that places all students, including those with special needs, in an equal and equitable education system. In the context of Christianity, inclusive education is not only a response to pedagogical needs but also a manifestation of theological values such as love, justice, acceptance, and recognition of the dignity of every human being as the image and likeness of God (*Imago Dei*). This study analyzes inclusive education from a Christian perspective by reviewing the basic principles of inclusivity and pedagogy, the legal foundations, and those underlying its application. This research also reviews the role of churches and schools in forming inclusive educational communities, including in curriculum development, provision of infrastructure, and social-spiritual empowerment. The method used is a literature study of academic literature and biblical texts. The results of the study show that inclusive education in Christianity is not just a social obligation but a deep call of faith to restore and embrace all of God's creation in its entirety. The Church and Christian educational institutions are required to be exemplary in building a humane and liberating education system.

Keywords: Inclusive education, theology of social justice, disability, the love of Christ

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a model of an educational approach that emphasizes the acceptance and participation of all children in the learning process without discrimination based on physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or cultural differences. This concept emerged in response to injustices in the education system that often exclude vulnerable groups, especially children with special needs (Shaeffer, 2019).

In Indonesia, the inclusive education policy has been running for more than 10 years and has received appreciation and enthusiasm from various circles, especially education practitioners (Sutanto & Putra, 2020). National policies such as Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009 support the implementation of inclusive education at various levels of education (Pratama, 2021). However, in practice, many obstacles persist, including in the context of education based on religious values such as Christian educational institutions (Setiawan & Fadli, 2022). Challenges include a lack of trained teachers, insufficient resources, and resistance to change from traditional educational structures (Suryani, 2020).

Christian educational institutions have a mission not only to educate academically but also to shape the character and spirituality of students (Smith & Brown, 2021). Christian values such as love, justice, acceptance of others, and service to the weak are theologically deeply aligned with the spirit of inclusive education (Lee & Choi, 2020). God's Word in Galatians 3:28 states that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither

male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," affirming the principle of equality and inclusion in the Christian faith (Johnson, 2021). However, the implementation of these values in the education system is not yet fully optimal (Barker & McMillan, 2022). Many Christian schools still operate with a homogeneous approach, both in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and institutional culture (Williams & O'Connor, 2020). Structural challenges such as a lack of trained teachers, limited resources, and insufficient internal policy support weaken commitments to inclusion (Thompson & Lee, 2019). Despite these challenges, Christian educational institutions continue to hold the potential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment (Parker & Hall, 2021).

In addition, a misconception about inclusive education persists: that inclusion is limited only to children with disabilities. Inclusivity encompasses access and acceptance for all marginalized groups, including children from low economic backgrounds, ethnic minorities, or those with different learning styles. This underscores the need for value education and a pedagogical approach that more fully reflects the spirit of the gospel itself.

Christian theology itself provides a strong moral and spiritual foundation for supporting education that favors the weak and marginalized. Jesus, in His ministry, explicitly embraced the outcast, including the sick, women, and children. This shows that inclusivity is not only a value of modern education but also the essence of Christian spirituality itself.

However, the approach to inclusive education in the Christian context is still rarely studied in terms of theological and pedagogical integration. Many studies focus more on the technical aspects of inclusive education (e.g., curriculum modification, teacher training) but have not sufficiently explored how Christian values and teachings can form the basis for truly inclusive education. Previous research by Agustina et al. (2024) examined the opportunities and challenges of inclusive education from a Christian theology perspective, but it remains conceptual and has not addressed operational implementation. Meanwhile, Katiok et al. (2024) offer an inclusive education model based on Christian values but have not empirically tested the model's effectiveness in the field. On the other hand, Sumual & Arifianto (2024) explore the role of Christian leadership as a catalyst in inclusive education, but the focus is more on ecclesiastical leadership than on overall pedagogical-theological integration.

This challenge is compounded by theological assumptions that are sometimes exclusive or even discriminatory. In some cases, a narrow doctrinal approach can hinder openness to those who are different, whether physically, psychologically, or socially. Therefore, a liberating and participatory theological approach, such as the one developed by Volf, is highly relevant to the context of inclusive education based on the Christian faith. This approach emphasizes the importance of reconciliation, acceptance of the "other," and active participation in building an inclusive community.

Based on the identification of the above problems, this study aims to analyze the implementation of inclusive education in the context of Christian education by exploring the integration between Christian theological principles and inclusive pedagogical practices. Thus, this research is not only important from a pedagogical point of view but also contributes to the theological and praxis-oriented renewal of Christian education. Raising inclusion as a key theme allows Christian educational institutions to revisit their identities and social roles in an increasingly pluralistic society. Furthermore, this research is expected to provide a model of Christian educational approach that is rooted in faith yet open to the complexities of social

realities and the needs of today's students. This aligns with the vision of transformative education, which changes individuals not only cognitively but also morally and spiritually.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach through a literature review. Data collection involved document study and systematic literature review techniques, drawing from primary sources such as biblical texts, national education policy documents, and operational guidelines from Christian educational institutions, as well as secondary sources including academic articles, books, and research reports on inclusive education, inclusive theology, and Christian values in pedagogical practice. Literature searches utilized reputable databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and JSTOR, with selection based on publications from the last 10 years, relevance to the Indonesian context, and focus on theological-pedagogical integration.

Data analysis utilized thematic content analysis, encompassing data familiarization, coding of relevant text segments (e.g., theological concepts, implementation barriers), theme development (e.g., "Theological Foundations of Inclusivity," "Operational Challenges"), theme review and refinement, and analytical narrative writing supported by quotations and interpretation. Additionally, hermeneutic analysis interpreted biblical texts and theological documents in relation to inclusive education, bridging theological meanings with contemporary pedagogical realities. As Creswell (2018) notes, this qualitative approach described social phenomena in depth and illuminated contextual meanings, aligning with the objective of exploring Christian values in inclusive educational practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Policies for the implementation of Inclusive Education in Education

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is based on various legal bases that ensure the right of every child, including children with special needs (ABK), to receive equal and quality education. The various state legal bases that govern the implementation of Inclusive Education in order from laws to ministerial regulations, are as follows:

1. 1945 Constitution Article 31 Paragraph (1)

This article states that every citizen has the right to education. This affirms the state's commitment to provide equal access to education for all children, including children with special needs who are citizens.

2. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System

Article 5 Paragraph (1) regulates that every citizen has the right to quality education. Article 32 Paragraph (1) emphasizes that education is held in an inclusive manner, namely providing equal opportunities for all students without discrimination. Article 5 Paragraph (2) states that citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social disorders have the right to receive special education. Article 5 Paragraph (3) states that citizens in remote or underdeveloped areas and remote indigenous peoples have the right to receive special service education. Article 5 Paragraph (4) emphasizes that citizens who have the potential for intelligence and special talents have the right to receive special education.

3. Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities

Article 40 stipulates that educational programs for persons with disabilities must be provided in the national education system through inclusive education and special education.

Article 43 states that the government must provide adequate accommodation for students with disabilities. Article 44 requires universities that provide educational programs for prospective educators to include inclusive education in the teacher training curriculum. Article 46 emphasizes that the central and regional governments are obliged to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in vocational training institutions.

4. Government Regulation Number 13 of 2020 concerning Decent Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

This regulation regulates the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality educational services in educational units in all paths, levels, and types of education in an inclusive and special manner. In addition, students with disabilities have the same opportunities as education providers, educators, education staff, and students.

5. Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education

This regulation requires the district/city government to appoint at least one elementary school and one junior high school in each sub-district, as well as one secondary education unit to provide inclusive education that is required to accept students with special needs.

6. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 66 of 2013 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education

This regulation provides guidelines in the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. Inclusive education is education that pays attention to individual differences and the diversity of students, including those with special needs. The main goal of this regulation is to realize quality and equitable inclusive education for all students.

A number of available regulations have consequences for all elements of the country, be it formal, non-formal and informal educational institutions and the community is tasked with organizing an inclusive education park as part of the elaboration of existing laws and regulations.

Implementation of Inclusive Education in Education

Inclusive education is an education system that opens opportunities for all children, including children with special needs (ABK), to learn together in public schools without discrimination. To realize this system, in addition to the legal basis, the following implementing elements are urgently needed, namely, First, the School as an Implementer. Public schools (public and private) are the main implementers of inclusive education. For this reason, schools must have a flexible and adaptive curriculum, teachers who have competence in inclusive teaching and accessible infrastructure. Second, the second element is teachers and education personnel. Teachers are key actors in the implementation of Inclusive Education. Therefore, teachers are required to have pedagogical competence in dealing with student diversity, special training in inclusive classroom management and mental readiness and high empathy for ABK students. In addition to general teachers, Special Assistant Teachers (GPK) are also needed who are in charge of assisting classroom teachers in adjusting learning according to the individual needs of ABK students. GPK's role includes assessment, learning modification, and emotional support. Third. The following elements are Parents and Society. The role of parents is very important in supporting children's learning needs, including intensive communication with the school. Meanwhile, the community is expected to create an

environment that supports inclusion and reduces stigma against crew members. Four, Facilities and Infrastructure. These elements include physical accessibility and technology, namely Ramps, disabled toilets, adaptive classrooms, assistive technologies such as touchscreen computers, screen readers, and hearing aids. Fifth, Evaluation and monitoring. The success of the implementation of inclusive education is also determined by the aspects of planned and continuous evaluation and monitoring. This is necessary to ensure that inclusive education runs effectively. This process involves monitoring the learning outcomes of ABK, evaluating teacher training, and adjusting policies based on field data.

Thus, the implementation of inclusive education is only successful if there is synergy between all elements of the government, schools, teachers, parents, the community, and facility providers. All of these components must collaborate to create an education system that is fair, humane, and respects diversity.

Inclusive Education Models in Indonesia

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia takes place in the following models, namely:

1. Design Model for Inclusive Education Implementation

The model includes six main standards: recruitment of ABK, recruitment of special assistant teachers (GPK), curriculum modification and evaluation, accessibility of facilities and infrastructure, funding, and the role of school committees. This model aims to provide clear guidelines in the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

2. Scaffolding Learning Model

This model involves individual adjustment and the provision of special time for children with special needs (ABK), allowing them to catch up through special tutoring and active participation in learning activities. This approach increases student engagement and self-esteem by providing support that fits their needs.

3. Inclusive Education Model in the Context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

This model integrates inclusive education principles in the education system to ensure that children with disabilities can learn, play, and interact with all children in a supportive environment. This approach emphasizes the importance of individually adjusting the learning program to develop the full potential of students according to their abilities.

4. An Inclusive Education Model Based on Christian Values

One of the proposed models is an inclusive education model based on Christian values. This model emphasizes the importance of creating a loving and empathetic classroom atmosphere, as well as ensuring that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. This approach also involves adapting curriculum and teaching methods to meet the individual needs of students, as well as encouraging cooperation between regular teachers and special education teachers. Thus, inclusive education based on Christian values not only improves students' academic outcomes, but also shapes their character and morals, making them just, loving, and service-ready individuals.

Inclusive education in the context of Christian education aims to create a learning environment that accepts and respects diversity, including students with special needs. This approach is based on Christian values such as love, justice, and respect for the dignity of each individual.

Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education Based on Christian Values

Knowledge of the values of inclusive education based on Christian values has become a common knowledge that is shared together. However, its implementation faces a number of challenges, including:

1. Limited human resources

One of the main challenges in inclusive education is the limited number of trained and professional human resources. Many schools in Indonesia still lack educators who have special skills to handle students with special needs. This creates a gap in the implementation of inclusive education, where students with special needs do not receive adequate attention and support. The lack of relevant training for teachers is a significant factor that exacerbates this problem. To implement inclusive education effectively, teachers need to understand the different types of special needs that their students may have. It includes an understanding of developmental disorders, learning difficulties, as well as emotional and social disorders. Specialized training can help teachers develop appropriate and effective teaching strategies in supporting all students in an inclusive classroom.

2. Social Stigma and Inequality

Inclusive education does not only involve providing physical or academic support, but also confronting social stigma. Often students with disabilities or special needs are perceived as "different" and inferior to other students. This can affect their social interactions with classmates as well as how the surrounding community views them. Without strong understanding and support from the school environment and community, children with special needs will be isolated or not accepted.

3. Lack of Collaboration between Parents and Schools

Good collaboration between parents and schools is essential in inclusive education. However, often the relationship between parents and the school is not well established, especially if parents do not have a minimal understanding of inclusive education or are less involved in school activities. Without close cooperation, efforts to develop the potential of students with special needs become more difficult. Parents who support their children at home and work closely with teachers can increase the effectiveness of inclusive education.

4. Cultural and Social Barriers

Inclusive education often faces significant cultural and social barriers. Social stigma and unsupportive cultural attitudes can hinder efforts to provide an inclusive learning environment for all students, including those with special needs. In many societies, there is still a view that students with special needs should be placed in special institutions instead of being integrated into public schools. This view not only isolates such students but also hinders their social development. Discriminatory attitudes towards students with special needs can come in many forms. Additionally, teachers who are not trained in inclusive education may exhibit negative attitudes or do not know how to handle the unique needs of such students, which can ultimately affect their well-being and academic development.

Based on the description above, it can be said that the implementation of inclusive education, especially those based on Christian values, is faced with various complex challenges. From the constraints of physical facilities to the understanding of the community that is cultural and theological. On the one hand, although regulations and policies that lead to

an inclusive education system are available, their implementation in the field is still uneven. All these challenges show that inclusive education requires a serious moral and spiritual commitment, not only from educational institutions, but also from the church and society at large. In the light of the Christian faith, inclusive education services are not just a form of social policy, but a manifestation of God's love that elevates the dignity of every human being without exception.

Strategies to Face the Challenges of Inclusive Education.

Facing a number of challenges mentioned above, several strategies can be applied to overcome these challenges, including:

1. Improved Training and Education for Educators

It is important for educators to have a deep understanding of inclusive education as well as the skills to manage students with diverse needs. Training programs that focus on developing inclusive teaching skills and classroom management are essential. This training should also include an understanding of the importance of Christian values in creating a supportive atmosphere for all students.

2. Provision of Adequate Facilities and Resources

Educational institutions should strive to provide facilities that support students with special needs, such as larger classrooms, assistive equipment, and technology that can help students learn more effectively. The government and the church can also work together to provide assistance in the procurement of necessary facilities and resources.

3. Campaigns and Socialization to Increase Public Awareness

Efforts to change society's view of children with special needs are essential. Churches, together with educational institutions, can initiate campaigns that focus on the importance of inclusivity and reducing social stigma. This campaign can involve training for parents, teachers, and the community to teach the value of love and acceptance of differences.

The Role of the Church in Inclusive Education

The Church has an important role to play in the implementation of inclusive education, especially in the context of Christian education. This role is not only limited to the teaching aspect but also includes social and spiritual empowerment for people with disabilities. Sumual and Arifianto (2024) emphasized that the church is not only a place to worship, but can also be a center for social empowerment that fights for children's rights and creates a society that cares more about diversity. Through various programs such as seminars, trainings, or discussion groups, the church can provide a broader understanding of the importance of inclusivity in education. The role of the church in Inclusive Education is seen in the following ways:

1. Building an Inclusive Community

The church is seen as an inclusive community of faith, which not only accepts people with disabilities but also empowers them. In this context, the church plays the role of an agent of solidarity against stigma and marginalization of people with disabilities. As stated by Heri Purwanto, the church needs to have solidarity with people with disabilities, just as God has solidarity with the world incarnated in Jesus with a body full of wounds and 'disabilities' after His resurrection.

2. Preparation of an Inclusive Christian Religious Education Curriculum

The Church is expected to develop a Christian religious education curriculum specifically for congregations with disabilities. Amos Mauleky emphasized that every member of the church, including those with physical or mental disabilities, has the right to Christian religious education. This is in line with the principle of justice in education management, which states that every human being is created noble and miraculous.

3. Integrating Inclusive Perspectives in Church Theology

The Church is invited to integrate the perspective of inclusivity in theology and church life. The church needs to reflect on church life together by rereading biblical texts from an inclusive perspective so as to strengthen the church's commitment to be an inclusive community that is more inclusive and accepts inclusivity.

4. Social and Spiritual Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

The Church plays a role in the social and spiritual empowerment of people with disabilities through the ministry of transformative diakonia. Jozef M. N. Hehanussa emphasized the importance of the church in providing services that not only meet the physical needs, but also support the spiritual and social growth of people with disabilities. Thus, the church is not only a place of worship, but also an institution that is active in creating an inclusive society and empowering people with disabilities through Christian religious education that is adaptive and responsive to their needs.

In carrying out its role, the church also faces the challenge of limited resources and understanding among church administrators and members of the congregation. Social influences and stigma on children with special needs in society sometimes hinder the church from taking a more active role in implementing inclusive education in the church and the Christian educational institutions it manages.

The Positive Impact of Inclusive Education Based on Christian Values

The implementation of inclusive education based on Christian values benefits not only students with special needs, but also the entire educational community. For example, students who engage in an inclusive environment learn to develop empathy and a sense of responsibility towards their peers who have differences. They are taught that everyone, regardless of ability or background, deserves an equal opportunity to learn and grow.

Another positive impact is the formation of students' character. Inclusive Christian values-based education teaches them to see diversity as beautiful and enriching, not as an obstacle or difference to be avoided. This will equip them with a better understanding of the importance of love, justice, and equality in society.

In addition, inclusive education based on Christian values contributes to the creation of a more inclusive, equitable, and loving society. By teaching Christian values in education, we prepare the younger generation to be just, loving, and responsible leaders for the welfare of others.

Ultimately, it can be said that inclusive education based on Christian values is not just about physical and academic access, but more than that, creating a culture that supports diversity and acceptance. While there are many challenges in its implementation, through the right strategies, Christian values can be effectively integrated to create a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate education system.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive Christian values-based education, rooted in Jesus' teachings of unconditional love, acceptance, and diversity appreciation, seeks to foster nondiscriminatory learning environments especially for individuals with special needs, encompassing physical, cultural, economic, religious, and ability differences. Despite this theological foundation, implementation faces challenges like public and educator misconceptions about inclusivity's broad scope, limited school facilities, social stigma against disabilities, and the Church's resource constraints despite its strategic role in faith-building, social programs, and partnerships with Christian schools. Overcoming these requires teacher training, facility improvements, government support, and community involvement to realize inclusive education's positive societal impact. For future research, empirical studies could evaluate the long-term effectiveness of Church-school collaborations in Indonesia through longitudinal case studies of inclusive programs.

REFERENCES

- Agustina, A., et al. (2024). Pendidikan inklusif dalam perspektif teologi Kristen: Peluang dan tantangan. *Sabar: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen dan Katolik*, 1(2).
- Amus Mauleky. (2022). Manajemen kurikulum pendidikan agama Kristen di gereja bagi disabilitas. *Jurnal Ilmiah Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)*, 4(1).
- Barker, D., & McMillan, L. (2022). Christian education and inclusion: Addressing the challenges of diversity in faith-based schools. *International Journal of Christian Education*, 41(3), 224–238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijcedu.2022.04.007>
- Johnson, K. (2021). Galatians 3:28 and its application in modern Christian education. *Journal of Religious Education*, 39(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jore.2021.03.004>
- Katiok, K., et al. (2024). Implementasi model pendidikan inklusif berbasis nilai-nilai Kristiani. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Keguruan*, 2(8).
- Lee, J., & Choi, Y. (2020). Christian values in education: The role of love, justice, and inclusion in academic settings. *Journal of Christian Higher Education*, 19(2), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jche.2020.02.002>
- Parker, A., & Hall, B. (2021). Transforming Christian education: Cultivating inclusive learning environments. *Journal of Christian Education and Social Justice*, 11(4), 131–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcesj.2021.07.005>
- Pratama, Y. (2021). The impact of national policies on the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. *Journal of Education Policy and Practice*, 15(3), 211–223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jepp.2021.02.004>
- Setiawan, A., & Fadli, M. (2022). Overcoming barriers to inclusive education in religious-based schools: A case study of Christian educational institutions. *Journal of Religious Education Studies*, 18(2), 130–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jres.2022.01.005>
- Shaeffer, S. (2019). Inclusive education: A prerequisite for equity and social justice. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20(2), 181–192.
- Smith, R., & Brown, S. (2021). The mission of Christian educational institutions: Education, spirituality, and character development. *Journal of Christian Education Studies*, 14(1), 98–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jces.2021.01.008>
- Sumual, E. N., & Arifianto, Y. A. (2024). Kepemimpinan Kristen sebagai katalisator dalam pendidikan inklusif: Implementasi teologis kepemimpinan gerejawi dalam pendidikan anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Epigraphe: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani*, 8(2).
- Suriaman, & Rasau. (n.d.). Pendidikan inklusif dalam Merdeka Belajar di madrasah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Guru*.

- Suryani, S. (2020). Implementing inclusive education in religious schools: Challenges and opportunities in Indonesia. *Journal of Religious Education*, 39(4), 232–245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jore.2020.05.003>
- Sutanto, D., & Putra, I. (2020). The role of inclusive education in improving educational equality in Indonesia. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(6), 637–652. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1763704>
- Thompson, R., & Lee, A. (2019). Overcoming barriers to inclusion in Christian schools: A review of existing challenges and strategies. *Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(3), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiedu.2019.06.002>
- Williams, D., & O'Connor, M. (2020). Homogeneity and diversity in Christian educational institutions: A comparative analysis. *International Review of Education*, 66(5), 609–624. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irev.2020.03.006>