

Educational Leadership and Management Practices in Inclusive Learning Environments

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HOW TO CITE:

D. Vaishnavi, Azim A. Khan, Pradeep Kumar T, M. C. Yarriswamy, Nandini N, Anita swarnakar, Sandeep Dongre (2026).

Educational Leadership and Management Practices in Inclusive Learning Environments. International Journal of Special Education, 41(23s), 1131 - 1145

ABSTRACT:

Inclusive education has become a major concern in contemporary educational systems because schools are expected to respond to learner diversity, promote equity, and ensure meaningful participation for all students. Educational leadership and management are central to this process because they shape school culture, teacher practices, resource allocation, stakeholder participation, and policy implementation. This article examines educational leadership and management practices that support inclusive learning environments. It aims to identify key themes related to inclusive school culture, leadership vision, institutional change, teacher capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and barriers to inclusion. The study adopted a qualitative thematic review design. Six finalized data sources were used, including international policy documents

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and scholarly works on inclusive education, educational leadership, school culture, and system change. The selected sources were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring concepts and patterns related to inclusive leadership and management practices. The review identified seven major themes: inclusive school culture, leadership vision and shared responsibility, policy implementation, resource management and support systems, teacher collaboration and professional development, stakeholder participation, and barriers to inclusive practice. The findings show that inclusion requires both ethical leadership and systematic management practices. The article concludes that inclusive learning environments cannot be created through policy statements alone. They require committed leaders, collaborative school cultures, equitable resource systems, teacher support, and continuous efforts to remove institutional barriers. Effective leadership and management are therefore essential for transforming inclusive education principles into meaningful school-level practice.

Keywords: Inclusive education, educational leadership, school management, inclusive learning environments.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become a key issue in modern educational research, policy and practice due to the fact that it deals with the entitlement of all learners to be meaningfully involved in quality education. It does not confine itself to the physical location of the learners with disabilities in normal classes. Instead, it is a more general change initiative that deals with equity and participation, recognition and restructuring of educational systems to address learner diversity. Inclusive education research as defined by Artiles et al. (2006) is an equity-based discipline that questions the long-standing beliefs about disability, difference, and educational opportunity. In this context, inclusion demands schools to investigate how institutional organization, classroom practices, school leadership choices, and teacher ideologies facilitate or limit the inclusion of various learners.

Inclusive education has evolved over the years and its meaning is still understood in various ways. Other interpretations emphasize primarily students with disabilities, whereas others understand inclusion more generally, relating it to all types of learner diversity, such as language,

culture, gender, socio-economic status, ability, and marginalization. According to Göransson and Nilholm (2014), research in inclusive education is conceptually diverse and thus makes the field hard to pin down. In the same way, Nilholm and Göransson (2017) elaborate that inclusion can be perceived in a variety of ways, that is, in the sense of place, to the broader sense of democracy and community. This theoretical complexity renders it significant that educational managers and leaders adopt a straight and ethical perspective of inclusion.

The broader agenda of quality education is also closely related to inclusive education. In their opinion, Operti et al. (2014) do not claim that inclusion is a distinct reform agenda but a necessary aspect of quality education and Education for All. In this sense, an inclusive learning environment is where all learners are appreciated, supported, and empowered to have significant learning outcomes. Florian (2014) also notes that inclusive education should be backed by effective evidence and the conceptual understanding as well as focus on the quality of the learning experiences. Thus, it is not just a question of access but also of participation,

learning, achievement, and belonging.

Pedagogy and responsiveness of the teachers are crucial in inclusive education at the classroom level. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) propose the concept of inclusive pedagogy, where the focus is placed on expanding the range of what is usually offered in the classroom as opposed to creating distinct practices to be used by a set of learners. This point of view takes the focus out of classifying the learners through deficiencies and initiating adaptable pedagogical methods that can support every learner. Nevertheless, beliefs, confidence, preparation, and professional support of the teachers affect the implementation of inclusive pedagogy. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) demonstrate that the attitudes of teachers towards integration and inclusion are significant determinants of reception and implementation of inclusive practices. Similarly, de Boer et al. (2011) indicate that teacher attitude is an important factor influence of inclusive education, particularly given the fact that classroom inclusion demands day-to-day dedication, adjustment and communication with diverse learners.

Inclusive learning environments are thus a critical prerequisite of teacher preparation. According to Forlin and Chambers (2011), the teachers tend to raise concerns over inclusion when they believe they are not well-equipped to address the varying learning needs. Savolainen et al. (2012) also relate teacher attitudes and self-efficacy to inclusive practice, indicating that teachers are more inclined to adopt inclusive practice when they think that they are competent to teach diverse learners effectively. In this aspect, training can have a positive role. Sharma et al. (2008) discovered that teacher training in pre-service teachers can affect the attitude to include, and this implies that teacher training should be carefully planned to develop inclusive values, skills and confidence. Professional development is necessary in addition to initial preparation. According to Waitoller and Artiles (2013), professional development must enhance teacher capacity and also respond to the institutional conditions that are larger and which influence inclusive practice.

Recent scholarship also proposes that both

research and practice need to be rethought in terms of inclusive education. Messiou (2017) points out the necessity to re-evaluate the way that the research on inclusive education interacts with the voices of learners, the ways of their participation, and exclusion. This is significant since inclusive education cannot be solely narrowed down to technical means. It should also find out whose voices are heard, whose needs are known and whose involvement is restricted in schools. This type of thinking makes the role of inclusion not only the responsibility of individual teachers but the entire institution.

This wider institutional responsibility revolves around educational leadership. Inclusive learning settings need leaders with abilities to create inclusive cultures, teacher support, provide resources fairly, engage stakeholders, and oppose exclusionary practices. Ryan (2006) theorizes inclusive leadership as a social justice-based educational process that aims at democratizing schools and reacting to diversity. On the same note, an international viewpoint by Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004) demonstrates that the inclusion leadership entails the creation of collaborative cultures, shared responsibility as well as organizational change. Such notions imply that school leaders are not only administrators of inclusion policies. They play a central role in the process of defining the values, structures, and practices in accordance with which inclusion can become significant.

Inclusive education is a challenge to implement, even with increasing policy and scholarly interest. Among the challenges that are commonly experienced in schools are teacher preparedness, negative attitudes, limited resources, inflexible curricula, inadequate professional development, and poor leadership commitment. These issues show that there is a need to explore the role of educational leadership and management practices in promoting inclusive learning environments. This article, therefore, discusses the place of leadership and management in advancing inclusion and, in such a way that it looks at inclusive school culture, teacher capacity, stakeholder participation, resource management, and elimination of institutional barriers.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The article assumed a qualitative thematic review design to explore the educational leadership and management practices in inclusive learning settings. A thematic review was deemed suitable due to the nature of the objective being the article, which was not to gather primary data of the respondents, but rather to recognize, synthesize and analyze recurrent concepts of the chosen policy and scholarly literature. The review revolved around the role of leadership, management, school culture, stakeholder involvement, and institutional practices in promoting inclusive education. Thematic analysis was appropriate to this article since the sources chosen cover inclusion in various yet similar perspectives such as policy, school development, leadership, equity and organisational change.

The selected documents were considered textual sources of data in the study. These sources were reviewed in order to conceptualize the idea of inclusive learning environments and what leadership and management practices are suggested to be enhanced to promote inclusion. It was an interpretive review and thus did not involve hypothesis testing or statistical measurement of relationships.

2.2 Data Sources

Six finalized data sources were used in the article. These were three international policy/framework-based documents and three academic scholarly resources. The policy-based sources were UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All, OECD's Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity, and the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education's Inclusive School Leadership: A Practical Guide to Developing and Reviewing Policy Frameworks (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021; OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2020). The sources were chosen since they present up-to-date international insights into the concept of inclusion, equity, governance, leadership, and reforms in the educational system.

The academic sources included Index of Inclusion by Booth and Ainscow, article by Ainscow on inclusive education system development, and article by Ainscow and Sandill on development of cultures and leadership in inclusive education (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow and Sandill, 2010). The works were chosen as they offer solid conceptual and theoretical bases of knowledge about the inclusive school development, institutional change, school culture, and school leadership practices.

2.3 Criteria for Selection of Sources

The sources were chosen in a purposive manner based on their relevancy to the subject of educational leadership and management in inclusive learning environment. The conceptual relevance was the first criterion, in which all sources must have dealt with inclusive education, leadership, management, school culture, policy implementation, or learner diversity. Academic or institutional credibility was the second criterion. The chosen sources were either created by the internationally recognized organizations, including UNESCO, OECD, as well as the European Agency of Special Needs and Inclusive Education, or by the established scholars in the area of inclusive education.

The third criterion was thematic usefulness. The sources were all related to one or more key themes of the article, including inclusive school culture, leadership vision, stakeholder collaboration, teacher capacity building, resource management, and barriers to inclusion. Relevance to practice was the fourth criterion, as the article was to relate conceptual discussion to the school-level practice of leadership and management. Based on this, it was found that the sources chosen were suitable to a thematic article.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The systematic reading and extraction of the relevant information in the six chosen sources facilitated data collection. To begin with, every source was read to find the parts that addressed the topic of inclusive education, school leadership, school management practices, teacher support, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, policy implementation, and

inhibitors to inclusion. Second, major ideas, concepts, arguments and recommendations were selected and written down under general initial headings.

As an example, the report by UNESCO was analyzed to discuss the exclusion, equity, access, and systemic barriers to inclusion (UNESCO, 2020). The themes related to governance, diversity, policy coordination, and resource management were checked in the OECD report (OECD, 2023). Inclusive leadership frameworks and policy review practices were looked into in the European Agency document (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021). In the same manner, concepts about inclusive cultures, policies and practices were discovered based on the work of Booth and Ainscow (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Ainscow reviewed his work in terms of system-level change and levers to include (Ainscow, 2005) and Ainscow and Sandill reviewed the article in terms of leadership and organizational culture (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010).

2.5 Data Analysis

The article employed the thematic analysis in interpreting the chosen data sources. Familiarization was used as a starting point of the analysis where the sources were read to get an idea of their main arguments. Coding of recurring ideas was done in the second stage. The terms and concepts that were found in these codes were inclusive culture, leadership commitment, school improvement, resource allocation, collaboration, policy implementation, professional development, and barriers to participation.

The third stage involved the grouping of related codes into larger themes. The key themes have been found to be: inclusive school culture, leadership vision and shared responsibility, policy implementation, management of resources and support systems, teacher collaboration and capacity building, stakeholder participation, and barriers to inclusive practice. At the last phase, the

themes were analyzed concerning the research questions of the article. The purpose of the analysis was to compare policy-oriented and academic viewpoints and create a synthesized view of the role of educational leadership and management in promoting inclusive learning environments.

3. Results

Thematic analysis of the six chosen data sources resulted in seven broad themes associated with educational leadership and management practices in inclusive learning settings. These topics were inclusive school culture, vision and shared responsibility in leadership, policy implementation and institutional change, managing resources and support systems, teacher collaboration and capacity building, stakeholder participation and barriers to inclusive practice. The results suggest that inclusive education is not only based on policy commitment but also rooted in the capability of school leaders and managers to turn the inclusive values into effective school-based systems.

3.1 Overview of Emergent Themes

The analysis revealed that the chosen sources approach covered both the policy and school-practice approaches of inclusion. According to UNESCO (2020) and OECD (2023), inclusion is a system-wide task that is associated with equity, access, governance, and allocation of resources. The European Agency of Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2021) pays more attention to inclusive school leadership and to reviewing the policy. Ainscow (2005) and Booth and Ainscow (2002) give conceptual and school level understanding of inclusive culture, organizational change and leadership.

The themes were obtained by finding common ideas on the six sources as shown in Table 1. The themes that were the most common included inclusive culture, leadership, collaboration, policy implementation, and barriers to inclusion.

Table 1: Emergent Themes from the Selected Data Sources

Theme	Key Focus	Main Supporting Sources
Inclusive school culture	Belonging, participation, respect for diversity, inclusive values	Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010
Leadership vision and shared responsibility	Inclusive vision, distributed leadership, collective accountability	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010
Policy implementation and institutional change	Translating policy into school practice, reform processes, levers for change	UNESCO, 2020; Ainscow, 2005
Resource management and support systems	Funding, infrastructure, support services, governance, monitoring	OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2020
Teacher collaboration and capacity building	Professional learning, peer support, inclusive pedagogy, teacher development	Ainscow, 2005; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021
Stakeholder participation	Parent involvement, learner voice, community engagement, inter-agency cooperation	Booth & Ainscow, 2002; OECD, 2023
Barriers to inclusive practice	Limited resources, weak training, exclusionary attitudes, fragmented implementation	UNESCO, 2020; Ainscow, 2005

The pattern presented in Table 1 suggests that inclusive learning environments are developed through the interaction of cultural, managerial, and leadership-related factors rather than through isolated interventions.

3.2 Theme 1: Inclusive School Culture as the Foundation of Inclusion

The initial theme of great significance was the focus on inclusive school culture. The discussion revealed that mutual values of respect, participation, equity, and belonging serve to establish inclusive learning environments. Booth and Ainscow (2002) conceptualize inclusion with the interrelated dimensions of developing inclusive cultures, generating inclusive policies and developing inclusive practices. This framework demonstrates that inclusive culture is not a marginal issue, but it forms the basis on which policies and practices are built.

Ainscow and Sandill (2010) also underline that organizational culture has a strong influence on the success inclusive education. According to their work, it is only when leadership practices touch upon beliefs, expectations, and collaborative habits of the school community that they become effective. Thus, the findings indicate that educational leaders should be aware of the invisible cultural aspects of education, such as the attitudes of teachers, relationships with students, expectations of the institution, and how much diversity is perceived as a strength.

Figure 1 shows the correlation between inclusive culture, policies and practices. The figure indicates that inclusive culture is the starting point, and policies and practices are the ways in which inclusive values are reflected at the institutional and classroom levels of action.

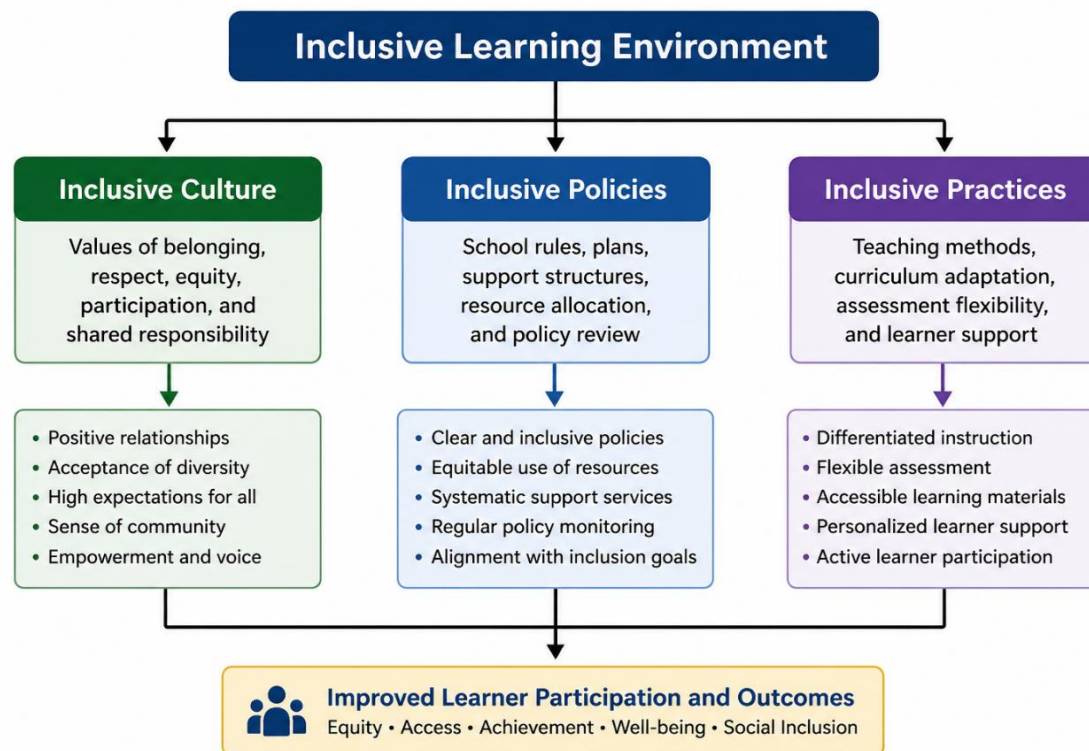


Figure 1: Relationship between Inclusive Culture, Policy, and Practice

As illustrated in Figure 1, inclusive learning environments require alignment between culture, policy, and practice. This finding is consistent with Booth and Ainscow's (2002) argument that inclusion must be embedded in the whole school rather than treated as a separate program.

3.3 Theme 2: Leadership Vision and Shared Responsibility

Leadership vision and shared responsibility was the second theme. It was found that inclusive leadership goes beyond administrative power. It entails the development of a common vision, sharing of responsibilities, promoting teamwork, and valuing every learner. Educational leadership of inclusivity in schools is one of the mechanisms mentioned by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2021) as important in building policy frameworks that embrace equity and participation.

Ainscow and Sandill (2010) also maintain that leadership also plays a role in inclusiveness by influencing organizational cultures and promoting collaborative types of problem-solving. This implies that inclusive leadership is not restricted

to the leadership of the principal. Rather, it pursues the process of school improvement by engaging teachers, coordinators, support staff, parents and learners. The findings thus indicate that the most effective type of inclusive leadership is both distributed and participatory.

The results also show that leaders have to become translators between the expectations of the policies and the reality of the classroom. They play a role in ensuring that the element of inclusion is evident in school planning, professional development, teacher support and evaluation systems. Inclusion can be an institutional aspiration and not an institutional reality without the commitment of its leadership.

3.4 Theme 3: Policy Implementation and Institutional Change

The third theme had been policy implementation and institutional change. The discussion showed that the same issue was raised in all of the sources: policy-wise inclusive education is popular, but its implementation is not even. UNESCO (2020) emphasizes the fact that numerous learners still feel excluded due to the

fact that the education systems fail to adequately respond to diversity. This implies that the mere endorsement of the policy is not enough to ensure an inclusive practice.

According to Ainscow (2005), the process of the creation of inclusive education systems needs to find the so-called levers of change. These levers are leadership, collaboration, evidence-based

inquiry and institutional practice changes. The findings indicate that school leaders should go beyond compliance-based implementation and come up with systems to carry out the constant review and improvement. The chosen sources, as illustrated in Table 2, offer various degrees of policy implementation, starting with international policy frameworks to school-based measures.

Table 2: Policy and Practice Dimensions of Inclusive Education

Level of Implementation	Main Concern	Leadership and Management Requirement	Supporting Sources
International/system level	Equity, rights, access, inclusion for all learners	Policy coherence, funding, accountability, national monitoring	UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2023
Institutional/school level	School culture, inclusive planning, resource organization	Inclusive school vision, policy review, staff coordination	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021; Booth & Ainscow, 2002
Classroom level	Participation, differentiated instruction, learner support	Teacher development, flexible pedagogy, collaborative support	Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010
Community level	Parent involvement, learner voice, inter-agency support	Stakeholder engagement, communication, shared responsibility	Booth & Ainscow, 2002; OECD, 2023

Table 2 shows that inclusive education requires action at multiple levels. The findings indicate that leadership and management practices are necessary to connect system-level policy with school-level and classroom-level implementation.

3.5 Theme 4: Management of Resources and Support Systems

The fourth theme was management of resources and support systems. The review revealed that inclusive learning spaces cannot be achieved without systematic design and equal distribution of resources. OECD (2023) notes that governance, funding, capacity building, and monitoring are essential to the existence of equity and inclusion. This indicates that management

practices are at the core of the practical implementation of inclusive education.

Resource-related barriers are the other significant barriers to inclusion identified by UNESCO (2020). These are poor infrastructure, untrained staff, insufficient assistive technology and inequitable access to learning support. The findings show that educational managers should make sure that resources are not dispensed in a mechanical manner but fairly based on the needs of the learners.

The results of the analysis have indicated effective management practices that are: planning learner support, organizing teacher training, coordinating specialist services, accessible infrastructure,

adapting teaching-learning materials and monitoring student participation. These practices show that management in inclusive education is administrative, pedagogical as well as ethical.

3.6 Theme 5: Teacher Collaboration and Capacity Building

The fifth theme was teacher collaboration and professional capacity building. The review showed that inclusive education is not achievable without the support of teachers through training, working together and continuous professional learning. Ainscow (2005) stresses that cooperation and investigation are valuable tools to build inclusive systems. This implies that learners are not to be left in the hands of teachers when it comes to dealing with diversity among learners.

Even the European Agency of Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2021) focuses on leadership as a factor to facilitate profession learning and shared responsibility. The results indicate that leaders must provide school designs that allow teachers to collaborate, exchange strategies, and deliberate on needs of learners as well as reflect on classroom activities.

The capacity building of the teachers became a key management task. It encompasses differentiated instruction training, classroom adaptation, inclusive assessment, assistive resource utilization, and problem-solving. The analysis also indicates that professional development must be an on-going process and not a one-time exercise. The inclusive schools need a learning culture where teachers are facilitated to enhance their practice with time.

3.7 Theme 6: Stakeholder Participation and Community Engagement

The sixth theme was stakeholder participation. This analysis revealed that inclusive education is enhanced when learners, parents, teachers,

support professionals and community members actively participate. Booth and Ainscow (2002) perceive inclusion as a participatory process and it involves the entire school community. This means that inclusive leadership must provide a chance to various stakeholders to participate in school development.

Another priority is the need to act concertedly in addressing the diversity of learners (OECD 2023). This involves school, family, policymaker, and support agency cooperation. The findings indicate that stakeholder involvement enhances the recognition of the needs of learners, builds a trustful relationship, and facilitates more reactive decision-making.

Inclusive learning settings, learners and parents must not be viewed as service consumers only. They are to be regarded as participative members in the enhancement of the school practices. This discovery is significant since inclusive education is based on relationships, communication, and shared ownership.

3.8 Theme 7: Barriers to Inclusive Practice

Barriers to inclusive practice was the seventh theme. In the sources, a number of obstacles were noted as limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and inflexible curriculum, poor policy enforcement, exclusionary attitudes, ineffective infrastructure, and inefficient coordination. UNESCO (2020) highlights that exclusion remains a major problem to most learners even though there are international commitments to inclusion. Ainscow (2005) also supports the same argument saying that inclusive development involves finding out barriers in the education system and eliminating them. These barriers affect the education system at various levels and demand particular leadership and management reactions as they are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Barriers to Inclusive Practice and Leadership Responses

Barrier	Effect on Inclusive Learning Environments	Required Leadership or Management Response	Supporting Sources
Limited teacher preparation	Teachers may struggle to respond to diverse learner needs	Continuous professional development and mentoring	Ainscow, 2005; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021
Inadequate resources	Learners may lack assistive devices, support services, or accessible materials	Equitable resource allocation and support planning	UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2023
Weak school culture	Diversity may be viewed as a problem rather than a strength	Development of inclusive values and shared responsibility	Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010
Rigid curriculum and assessment	Learners with diverse needs may be excluded from meaningful participation	Flexible pedagogy and assessment adaptation	UNESCO, 2020; Booth & Ainscow, 2002
Fragmented policy implementation	Inclusive policies may not influence classroom practice	Policy review, monitoring, and school-level planning	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021; Ainscow, 2005
Limited stakeholder involvement	Families and communities may remain disconnected from school decisions	Participatory decision-making and community engagement	OECD, 2023; Booth & Ainscow, 2002

The barriers to inclusion do not merely include individual learner difficulties as demonstrated in Table 3. Institutional, cultural and managerial weaknesses are often the sources of their production. As such, leadership reactions should aim at transforming school systems instead of just anticipating that learners can be changed.

3.9 Integrated Model of Inclusive Educational Leadership and Management

These findings suggest that inclusion learning is achieved through the combination of leadership

and management practices. Leadership offers direction, vision, values and shared responsibility whereas management offers planning, resources, coordination, and monitoring. They are all in favor of inclusive school culture, teacher capacity, stakeholder engagement, and learner participation. Figure 2 shows a synthesized model that was created based on the theme results. The model illustrates the role of leadership and management practices towards inclusive learning environments.

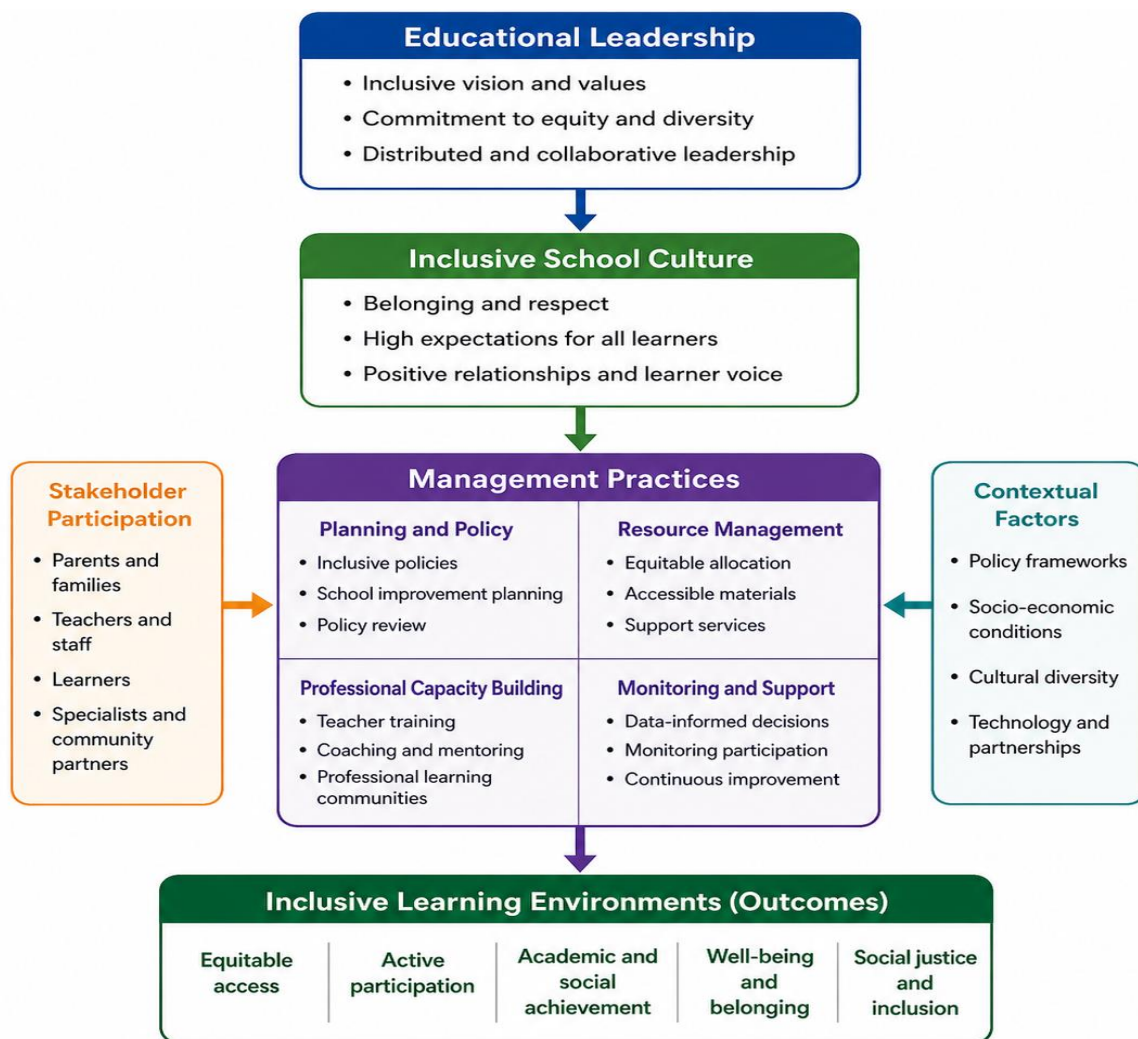


Figure 2: Integrated Model of Educational Leadership and Management for Inclusion

Inclusive educational leadership and management are interrelated as shown in Figure 2. According to the model, inclusive results are realized when leadership values are reinforced by effective management systems. This result complies with the inclusion as a system-wide possibility in UNESCO (2020) and the governance and support structures in OECD (2023).

4. Discussion

The findings of the thematic analysis suggest that the inclusive learning environments are formed as a result of interplay between the school culture, leadership vision, management systems, teacher capacity, stakeholder participation, and elimination of institutional barriers. These results affirm the perception that policy commitment is not sufficient to bring about inclusion. Instead, it involves unrelenting leadership measures,

institutional change and workable management frameworks that allow every learner to have a significant role to play in the life of the school.

Among significant discoveries was the fact that inclusive learning environments are based on inclusive school culture. This observation is in line with the suggestion that the school leaders should be agents of change and not administrative managers. Inclusive leadership entails that principals and school leaders should build a common vision, confront exclusionary behaviors, and establish school environments that foster participation among all learners. According to Billingsley et al. (2018), the preparation of leadership should be reinforced in order to provide the school leaders with the capacity to guide reform in schools of inclusion. This is important in the sense that the findings indicated that inclusive education demands leaders who

have the capability to relate vision, policy, teacher support, and learner engagement.

The role of principals is particularly significant as they are in a key position between policy expectations and classroom practices. Cobb (2015) contends that there are various roles that principals play as special education and inclusive education leaders. Their roles include instructional leadership, policy and legal adherence, coordination of resources, teacher support, and building of inclusive school culture. This interpretation confirms the current findings that the leadership vision and shared responsibility were one of the prominent themes.

The findings further revealed that inclusive learning communities require equity, belonging, participation and diversity respect values. This has a close association with social justice leadership. According to DeMatthews (2015), social justice leadership can help to establish more inclusive schools by confronting unjust systems and facilitating equal access to education. Inclusive leadership thus cannot be construed as merely technical management. It is also an ethical and political habit that presupposes that leaders have to recognize and interrupt exclusion.

Theoharis (2007) also holds the same view, contending social justice leadership is one that leads through opposition to inequitable systems and practices. This outlook is useful in understanding the challenges of inclusive change. School leaders who seek to embrace inclusion can be opposed by staff, parents, institutional culture or accountability. The current findings found weak school culture, inflexible curricula, and exclusion attitudes to be significant barriers. These results imply that the leadership of inclusion should have the bravery to fight injustice and the ability to lead the schools by resistance.

Theoharis (2010) also demonstrates that some of the practical strategies employed by principals who promote equity include enhancing access to rigorous learning, developing staff capacity, reinforcement of inclusive placement, and challenges deficit assumptions about students. These tactics are in line with the findings of this

article especially the themes on teacher capacity building, stakeholder involvement, and inclusion practices in classrooms.

The other significant data was the disconnect between policy inclusion and school implementation. Inclusive education is a highly endorsed policy, but schools find it difficult to put into practice. According to DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014), educational administrators have a significant challenge when tackling inequities and adopting inclusion. Some of these challenges are scarce resources, conflicting accountability pressures, staff resistance, and ambiguous policy directives. This backs the current findings, which revealed that the hindrances to inclusion exist at cultural, institutional, managerial and classroom levels.

DeMatthews et al. (2021) also emphasize that the nature and extent of inclusive change highly depend on the perceptions and practices of principals. When principals perceive inclusion as a mandate, it can be a mere facade. Nevertheless, once they comprehend the concept of inclusion as a significant school reform, they will tend to support cooperative planning, teacher development, and learner-based practices. The interpretation favors the discovery that leadership commitment should be related to shared responsibility and institutional change.

These findings indicated that inclusive education involves good management of resources, support structures, professional development, and involvement of stakeholders. Kinsella (2020) claims that the institutional and management practices of inclusive schools are planned. This implies that inclusion should be established as a part of school practices, human resource, support strategies, communication strategies, and pedagogical planning. The current results also point to the fact that inclusive management does not only concentrate on administrative efficiency. It entails structuring the school in such a manner that it can be participatory to various learners.

This is especially crucial when it comes to students with disabilities. DeMatthews et al. (2020a) demonstrate that the significance of the principal leadership practices is prominent in

successful inclusive schools with students with disabilities. These practices involve the creation of inclusive expectations, teacher support, coordination of special services, data utilization and making sure that students with disabilities are not segregated by the rest of the school community. The practices complement the outcomes of the thematic analysis particularly, the themes of resource management, teacher collaboration, and inclusive classroom practices.

The results also showed that inclusion is centered around teacher collaboration and professional capacity building. Nonetheless, teacher assistance hinges on the preparation and ability of school executives themselves. DeMatthews et al. (2020b) claim that leadership preparation programs should be more oriented to equip principals with special education and inclusive schooling. This is significant since leaders can be easily required to deal with complicated duties pertaining to disability rights, instructional modification, family participation, and inclusive culture without adequate preparation.

In order to create effective inclusive schools, Billingsley et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of leadership preparation and reform. This reaffirms the conclusion that inclusion mandates systemic capacity building, as opposed to solitude teacher training. School leaders need to be ready to embrace inclusive pedagogy, organize multidisciplinary teams, involve families, and consider evidence to determine obstacles to participation.

In general, the discussion proves the idea that educational leadership and management are a focus of inclusive learning environments. The findings indicate that inclusive schools need ethically dedicated leaders, adept at managing organizations, and ready to deal with resistance and institutional barriers. This interpretation is reinforced by the reviewed sources of discussion as they demonstrate that principals are required to be instructional leaders, special education leaders, social justice leaders, and agents of organizational change.

Thus, inclusive education is supposed to be thought of as a whole-school reform process. It

demands shared values, shared leadership, coordination of resources, development of teachers, stakeholder participation, and ongoing examination of exclusionary practices. The main point is that schools cannot become inclusive by just making declarations in the policy. They need leadership training, effective management practices, and long-term dedication to equity-based change.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored the educational leadership and management practice in inclusive learning settings using a thematic review of chosen policy and academic materials. The results indicate that the inclusion process is not the simple act of having different learners in the same learning environment. Instead, it demands equity, participation, belonging, and meaningful learning of all students in a whole-school commitment. The school culture which was inclusive was found to be the base of this process, and the dimensions which supported it were leadership vision, shared responsibility, policy implementation, resource management, teacher collaboration, stakeholder participation and barrier removal. The review indicates that educational leaders have a key role in turning a set of values of inclusiveness into a real action within a school. The principals and leaders of schools shape the institutional culture, influence the teacher practice, distribute resources, organize support networks, and facilitate cooperation among teachers, parents, specialists, and learners. Meanwhile, the successful administration is needed to make sure that inclusive policies do not exist symbolically but are working in practice. This will involve planning, professional development, monitoring, infrastructure support, flexibility of curriculum, and fair allocation of resources. Another point of concern in the article is that inclusive education has been frustrating due to poor teacher training, lack of resources, inflexible curriculums, poorly executed implementation systems and exclusionary attitudes. Thus, inclusive leadership should be perceived as an administrative as well as an ethical duty. It needs leaders who are able to challenge inequities, develop collective capacity and maintain institutional change. Finally, it is

possible to conclude that inclusive learning environments are achieved with the help of visionary leadership and systematic management. Attaining the inclusive schools is truly achieved

where leadership values are backed with practical structures that empower all learners to access, participate and enjoy quality education.

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