

Inclusive Islamic Religious Education in Vocational Secondary Schools: Exploring Adaptive Pedagogy, Peer Tutoring, and Assessment for Students with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract

This study explores the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in an inclusive vocational school, focusing on learning adaptations, peer tutoring, and assessment practices for students with special educational needs at SMKN 5 Mataram, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving IRE teachers, special education teachers, and students. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that inclusive IRE learning is facilitated through adaptive instructional planning, multimedia-based teaching strategies, peer tutoring, and flexible assessment practices tailored to students' diverse learning needs. However, challenges remain, including limited teacher preparation, insufficient individualized learning programs, and inadequate support services. The study highlights the importance of collaborative and adaptive pedagogical approaches in promoting meaningful participation and equitable learning opportunities for students with special educational needs in Islamic education settings.

Keywords: *inclusive education; Islamic religious education; vocational school; peer tutoring; adaptive learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a global educational agenda aimed at ensuring equal access and participation for all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. The principle of inclusion emphasizes that every student has the right to learn together in the same educational environment and to receive educational services that accommodate their diverse needs. In recent decades, inclusive education has gained increasing international recognition through various policy initiatives and frameworks promoted by international organizations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization emphasizes that inclusive education is not merely about placing students with disabilities in mainstream schools but about transforming educational systems to remove barriers to participation and learning for all students (UNESCO, 2020).

The growing commitment to inclusive education has encouraged many countries to reform their educational policies and practices. Nevertheless, implementing inclusive education remains challenging, particularly in developing countries where schools often face limitations in infrastructure, teacher preparation, learning resources, and support services (Ainscow, 2020). Research indicates that although access to education for



students with special educational needs has improved significantly, meaningful participation and equitable learning outcomes continue to be major concerns in many educational settings (Florian, 2021). Consequently, the success of inclusive education depends not only on policy implementation but also on teachers' ability to adapt curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment practices to accommodate learner diversity.

In Indonesia, inclusive education has received increasing attention since the enactment of policies promoting equal educational opportunities for all citizens. The Indonesian government recognizes the rights of students with disabilities and special educational needs to receive quality education in both special and regular schools. As a result, an increasing number of public schools have been designated as inclusive schools. However, several studies have reported persistent challenges in implementing inclusive education, including limited teacher competence in inclusive pedagogy, insufficient collaboration among educational stakeholders, inadequate learning support systems, and difficulties in designing adaptive learning programs for diverse learners (Sharma & Sokal, 2023).

These challenges become more complex in vocational education settings. Vocational schools are expected to develop both academic competencies and practical skills that prepare students for future employment. Consequently, teachers are required to address not only students' cognitive development but also their vocational and social competencies. For students with special educational needs, participation in vocational education may present additional challenges due to differences in learning styles, communication abilities, and social interaction skills. Therefore, adaptive instructional approaches are essential to ensure that all students can participate meaningfully in learning activities and achieve educational success.

Within the context of inclusive education, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a unique position. Unlike many other school subjects that primarily focus on cognitive achievement, IRE aims to develop students' religious knowledge, moral character, spiritual awareness, and ethical behavior. Islamic education seeks to nurture holistic human development by integrating intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of learning (Al-Attas, 1991). Consequently, the implementation of IRE in inclusive schools requires pedagogical approaches that accommodate students' diverse learning needs while preserving the essential objectives of Islamic education.

Previous studies have highlighted the important role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering inclusive values such as compassion, tolerance, social justice, and respect for human dignity (Halstead, 2007). These values are consistent with the broader goals of inclusive education, which emphasize participation, equity, and respect for diversity. However, the practical implementation of IRE in inclusive classrooms remains challenging. Teachers often encounter difficulties in adapting instructional materials, selecting appropriate teaching methods, and assessing learning outcomes for students with diverse abilities and educational needs (Haug, 2024).

One approach that has gained considerable attention in inclusive education is adaptive pedagogy, which emphasizes flexibility in curriculum design, instructional delivery, and assessment practices. Adaptive pedagogy is closely related to the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which advocates the provision of multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression to accommodate diverse learners (CAST, 2024). Similarly, Differentiated Instruction Theory suggests that effective teaching requires adjustments in content, process, product, and learning environment according to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2022). These theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding how Islamic Religious Education can be adapted within inclusive educational settings.

Several studies have examined inclusive education practices in Indonesian schools. Most existing research focuses on teacher attitudes toward inclusion, institutional readiness, curriculum adaptation, and challenges in serving students with disabilities. Other studies have explored Islamic education from the perspective of values, character development, and religious instruction. However, relatively limited attention has been devoted to investigating how Islamic Religious Education is implemented in inclusive vocational schools, particularly regarding instructional adaptation, peer-assisted learning, and assessment practices for students with special educational needs. Furthermore, few studies have examined these issues within vocational education contexts where practical learning activities and diverse student characteristics present unique pedagogical challenges.

This research gap is particularly important because vocational schools increasingly serve students with diverse educational needs while simultaneously preparing them for future employment and social participation. Understanding how Islamic Religious Education teachers adapt instructional practices, facilitate inclusive participation, and assess student learning can provide valuable insights for improving educational quality in inclusive settings. Such knowledge may also contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive Islamic education by demonstrating how religious instruction can support both academic learning and social inclusion.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in an inclusive vocational school, focusing on learning adaptations, peer tutoring practices, and assessment strategies employed in Class XI Visual Communication Design (DKV) at SMKN 5 Mataram. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how teachers accommodate diverse learning needs, promote meaningful participation for students with special educational needs, and address challenges associated with inclusive religious education. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of adaptive pedagogical practices and provide practical recommendations for educators, school administrators, and policymakers seeking to strengthen inclusive Islamic education in vocational schools.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in an inclusive vocational school setting. A case study approach was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth examination of educational practices within their natural context and allows researchers to understand how participants interpret and experience specific educational phenomena (Yin, 2018). The study focused on the implementation of IRE in Class XI Visual Communication Design (DKV) at SMKN 5 Mataram, an inclusive vocational secondary school in Indonesia.

The research was conducted at SMKN 5 Mataram, a public vocational school designated as an inclusive educational institution. The school accommodates students with diverse educational backgrounds and special educational needs while implementing the national curriculum. Class XI Visual Communication Design (DKV) was selected as the primary setting because it includes students with special educational needs who participate in regular Islamic Religious Education classes alongside their peers.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of inclusive Islamic Religious Education. The participants consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers, special education teachers (Guru Pendamping Khusus), school administrators, and students. These participants were considered capable of providing rich and relevant information regarding instructional adaptation, classroom interaction, peer tutoring, and assessment practices in inclusive learning environments.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to examine teaching practices, student participation, peer interactions, and classroom management strategies during Islamic Religious Education lessons. The observations enabled the researcher to obtain firsthand information regarding the implementation of inclusive instructional practices.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, school administrators, and students to gain deeper insights into their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to inclusive Islamic Religious Education. This interview format allowed participants to express their views freely while ensuring that discussions remained aligned with the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Document analysis was also employed to complement observational and interview data. The analyzed documents included lesson plans, learning modules, assessment records, school policies, and other educational documents related to inclusive education practices. These documents provided valuable contextual information and helped verify findings obtained through observations and interviews.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). The analysis involved several stages. First, all observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentary materials were reviewed

repeatedly to ensure familiarity with the data. Second, meaningful units of information were coded according to their relevance to the research questions. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader categories and themes. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted and synthesized in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature on inclusive education and Islamic Religious Education.

The analysis generated several major themes, including adaptive instructional planning, multimedia-based learning practices, peer tutoring as a strategy for inclusion, adaptive assessment practices, and challenges in implementing inclusive Islamic Religious Education. These themes formed the basis of the findings and discussion presented in this study.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. First, methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Second, source triangulation was used by collecting data from multiple participants, including teachers, students, and school administrators. Third, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition, prolonged engagement in the research setting enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of classroom dynamics and school culture, thereby enhancing the dependability and authenticity of the findings.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing personal identities and ensuring that all collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

By adhering to these ethical principles, the study sought to protect participants' rights and ensure the integrity of the research process.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Adaptive Planning of Islamic Religious Education in Inclusive Classrooms

The findings indicate that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMKN 5 Mataram begins with adaptive instructional planning designed to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. Teachers develop lesson plans based on the national curriculum while making adjustments to learning objectives, instructional materials, teaching strategies, and classroom activities according to students' abilities and learning characteristics. Although the curriculum remains identical for all students, flexibility is applied during the instructional process to ensure meaningful participation for students with special educational needs.

The adaptation process reflects an inclusive pedagogical approach that prioritizes accessibility and participation rather than uniformity of instruction. Teachers reported that understanding students' individual characteristics is essential for designing learning experiences that are both meaningful and achievable. Consequently, instructional planning involves collaboration between subject teachers and special education teachers in identifying students' needs and determining appropriate learning accommodations.

These findings support the principles of Inclusive Education, which emphasize the importance of removing barriers to learning and participation for all students (Ainscow, 2020). The results also align with the concept of Differentiated Instruction proposed by Tomlinson (2022), which suggests that effective teaching requires adjustments to content, process, and learning activities based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In this context, adaptive planning serves as a crucial foundation for creating equitable learning opportunities within Islamic Religious Education classrooms.

3.2. Multimedia-Based Inclusive Learning Practices

The study found that multimedia plays an important role in facilitating inclusive Islamic Religious Education learning. Teachers frequently utilize videos, visual presentations, digital learning materials, and interactive media to enhance students' understanding of religious concepts. The use of multimedia is particularly beneficial for students with learning difficulties because visual and audio resources provide alternative pathways for accessing information.

Teachers explained that multimedia-based instruction helps maintain students' attention and engagement while reducing the cognitive demands associated with conventional lecture-based approaches. Students also reported that visual learning materials made abstract religious concepts easier to understand and remember. In addition, multimedia resources supported the development of more interactive and student-centered learning environments.

These findings are consistent with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which advocates providing multiple means of representation to accommodate diverse learners (CAST, 2024). According to UDL principles, students differ in how they perceive and process information; therefore, educational materials should be presented through various formats to maximize accessibility and comprehension. The findings also support Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which argues that combining visual and verbal information enhances learning effectiveness and promotes deeper understanding (Mayer, 2021).

From an inclusive education perspective, multimedia serves not merely as a technological tool but as an instructional strategy that supports equitable participation. By diversifying methods of content delivery, teachers create learning environments that are more responsive to students' varying abilities and learning preferences.

3.3. Peer Tutoring as a Strategy for Social Inclusion

Another significant finding concerns the use of peer tutoring as a strategy to support students with special educational needs. Teachers encourage collaborative learning activities in which students assist one another during classroom tasks, discussions, and group projects. Through peer tutoring, students with special educational needs receive academic assistance while simultaneously developing social relationships with their classmates.

The findings suggest that peer tutoring contributes positively to both academic learning and social inclusion. Students reported feeling more comfortable asking questions and seeking assistance from peers than from teachers. Furthermore, peer interaction fosters mutual understanding, empathy, and acceptance among students with diverse abilities.

These findings are consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Learning occurs most effectively when students engage with more capable peers who provide support within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory highlights the importance of observational learning and modeling in shaping behavior and academic performance (Bandura, 1986).

Previous studies have also demonstrated that peer tutoring is an effective strategy for promoting inclusive participation and reducing social isolation among students with disabilities (Florian, 2021). Therefore, the implementation of peer tutoring within Islamic Religious Education classrooms contributes not only to academic achievement but also to the broader goals of inclusive education by fostering social belonging and participation.

3.4. Adaptive Assessment Practices in Inclusive Islamic Religious Education

Assessment practices constitute another important aspect of inclusive Islamic Religious Education. The findings reveal that teachers employ flexible assessment strategies to accommodate students' diverse abilities and learning needs. Although learning objectives remain aligned with the national curriculum, adjustments are made regarding assessment methods, task complexity, and performance expectations.

Teachers reported using various forms of assessment, including written assignments, oral presentations, classroom participation, practical demonstrations, and portfolio-based evaluations. For students with special educational needs, assessment procedures are modified to ensure that evaluation focuses on individual progress and learning achievement rather than comparison with peers.

These findings reflect the principles of inclusive assessment, which emphasize fairness, accessibility, and responsiveness to learner diversity (Haug, 2024). Inclusive assessment recognizes that students demonstrate learning in different ways and therefore requires flexible approaches to measuring achievement. The findings also align with authentic assessment theory, which encourages educators to evaluate students through meaningful tasks that reflect real-life applications of knowledge and skills.

The implementation of adaptive assessment practices demonstrates a commitment to educational equity by ensuring that all students have opportunities to demonstrate their learning according to their capabilities. Such practices are particularly important in inclusive settings where standardized assessment procedures may inadvertently disadvantage students with special educational needs.

3.5. Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Islamic Religious Education

Despite the positive practices identified in this study, several challenges continue to affect the implementation of inclusive Islamic Religious Education at SMKN 5 Mataram. One major challenge concerns limited teacher preparation in inclusive pedagogy. Although teachers demonstrate strong commitment to supporting students with special educational needs, many reported limited formal training in inclusive instructional strategies and disability-related issues.

Another challenge relates to the limited availability of individualized learning programs and specialized support services. Teachers often rely on personal initiative and professional experience when adapting instruction due to the absence of comprehensive support systems. Furthermore, collaboration among teachers, special education personnel, and parents is not always optimal, which may affect the consistency of educational support provided to students.

These findings correspond with previous studies indicating that teacher preparedness, institutional support, and professional development remain critical challenges in inclusive education implementation (Sharma & Sokal, 2023). UNESCO (2020) similarly emphasizes that successful inclusion requires systemic support, adequate resources, and collaborative educational practices.

The findings suggest that strengthening teacher professional development, enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, and improving institutional support mechanisms are essential for advancing inclusive Islamic Religious Education. Addressing these challenges will contribute to more effective learning experiences and greater educational equity for students with special educational needs.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that inclusive Islamic Religious Education at SMKN 5 Mataram is characterized by adaptive instructional planning, multimedia-based learning, peer tutoring, and flexible assessment practices. These strategies support meaningful participation and learning opportunities for students with special educational needs while reflecting broader principles of inclusive education. Nevertheless, ongoing challenges highlight the need for continued institutional commitment and professional support to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of inclusive educational practices.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in an inclusive vocational school, focusing on learning adaptations, peer tutoring, and assessment practices in Class XI Visual Communication Design (DKV) at SMKN 5 Mataram. The findings demonstrate that inclusive Islamic Religious Education is

characterized by adaptive instructional planning, multimedia-based learning strategies, peer-assisted learning, and flexible assessment practices designed to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. These approaches enable students with special educational needs to participate more actively in classroom activities while promoting equitable access to religious learning.

The study further reveals that adaptive pedagogy plays a crucial role in facilitating inclusive learning environments. The integration of multimedia resources enhances accessibility and student engagement, while peer tutoring supports both academic achievement and social inclusion. Similarly, adaptive assessment practices allow teachers to evaluate students' learning progress in ways that are responsive to individual abilities and learning characteristics. Collectively, these practices reflect the principles of inclusive education by emphasizing participation, accessibility, and educational equity.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the relevance of Inclusive Education Theory, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Differentiated Instruction in understanding how Islamic Religious Education can be effectively implemented in inclusive settings. The study demonstrates that religious education is not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge but can also serve as a vehicle for fostering social inclusion, empathy, collaboration, and respect for diversity. Consequently, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on inclusive Islamic education by highlighting the importance of adaptive pedagogical practices in promoting meaningful learning experiences for all students.

However, the findings also indicate several challenges, including limited teacher preparation in inclusive pedagogy, insufficient individualized learning programs, and constraints in specialized support services. These challenges suggest that the successful implementation of inclusive Islamic Religious Education requires not only teacher commitment but also institutional support, professional development opportunities, and collaborative engagement among educators, parents, and educational stakeholders.

The findings suggest that schools should strengthen teacher capacity in inclusive pedagogy through continuous professional development programs focusing on curriculum adaptation, differentiated instruction, and inclusive assessment. In addition, educational institutions should encourage greater collaboration among subject teachers, special education teachers, school administrators, and parents to ensure comprehensive support for students with special educational needs.

The study also highlights the importance of integrating multimedia technologies and peer-assisted learning strategies into Islamic Religious Education classrooms. Such approaches can increase student engagement, improve learning accessibility, and foster positive social interactions among students with diverse abilities. Therefore, schools should invest in accessible learning resources and inclusive instructional technologies to enhance educational participation and achievement.

At the policy level, educational authorities should develop more comprehensive guidelines for implementing inclusive Islamic Religious Education in mainstream and vocational schools. Such policies should emphasize teacher preparation, institutional readiness, accessible learning resources, and the provision of adequate support services for students with special educational needs. Strengthening policy support may contribute to the development of more equitable and inclusive educational systems capable of meeting the needs of diverse learners.

This study is limited to a single case study conducted in one inclusive vocational school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Furthermore, the research primarily focuses on teachers' and students' experiences within the implementation of Islamic Religious Education and does not extensively examine parental perspectives or long-term educational outcomes.

Future studies are recommended to investigate inclusive Islamic Religious Education across different school settings, regions, and educational levels. Comparative research involving multiple schools may provide broader insights into effective inclusive practices. Additionally, future research could examine the impact of adaptive instructional strategies, peer tutoring programs, and inclusive assessment models on students' academic achievement, social development, and religious understanding. Such studies would contribute to the development of evidence-based approaches for strengthening inclusive Islamic education in diverse educational contexts.

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