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Orchestrating inclusive school ecosystems: a contextual leadership model for primary schools

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ABSTRACT

This study develops a theoretically explicit, context-responsive model of inclusive primary-school leadership and uses North Halmahera as a boundary context rather than an empirically sampled case. A targeted integrative review combined qualitative policy and document analysis with three-stage thematic synthesis. Searches updated on 31 August 2026 covered ERIC, Crossref, Google Scholar, backward citation chaining, and official Indonesian sources. The final analytic corpus comprised 37 documents: 27 substantive scholarly sources, five methodological sources, and five policy or contextual documents. Eligibility required direct relevance to inclusive school leadership, instructional practice, teacher capacity, reasonable accommodation, family and community participation, support networks, or data-informed improvement. The synthesis yielded six interdependent dimensions: rights-based vision and ethics; inclusive instructional leadership; teacher-capacity development; reasonable accommodation and resource governance; family, community, and Disability Service Unit networks; and data-informed continuous improvement. The architecture synthesises rights and social-justice, instructional, distributed, and systems leadership: rights-based vision is foundational; instruction, capacity building, and accommodation form the operational core; and networks and data function as enabling and feedback conditions. No included study tested the six dimensions as a causal configuration, and no inter-rater coefficient was generated. KIK-HU is therefore a conceptual proposition, not a validated intervention, and requires multisite empirical testing.

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Introduction

Inclusive education has moved beyond the narrow question of where students with disabilities are placed toward a more demanding question: whether education systems can remove the cultural, organisational, pedagogical, and environmental barriers that restrict students' presence, participation, learning, and sense of belonging. This shift is consequential because formal access to a mainstream school does not itself constitute inclusion when students remain peripheral to classroom interaction, encounter inaccessible instruction or assessment, or depend on ad hoc support that is disconnected from school improvement. International scholarship therefore increasingly treats inclusion as a system-change agenda rather than a placement decision (Ainscow, 2020; Ainscow & Viola, 2024). The 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring Report similarly places leadership at the centre of educational improvement while stressing that effective leadership is contingent on context,

organisational capacity, and the ability to mobilise others around learning and equity goals (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2024). Within this agenda, the school principal occupies a strategically important position because policy commitments to equity are ultimately mediated through decisions about teaching, staff development, resource allocation, collaboration, and accountability at school level.

Research on inclusive school leadership has consequently expanded, but the field has not converged on a simple prescription for what principals should do. A recent systematic review of empirical studies published between 1995 and January 2024 identified 38 studies across 13 countries and synthesised principal practice into three broad areas: sustaining a shared commitment to inclusion, establishing inclusive organisational conditions, and building instructional and leadership capacity (DeMatthews, Conroy, & McKenzie, 2026). This consolidation is important, yet it also exposes the complexity of the phenomenon. Inclusive leadership involves moral purpose, instructional improvement, organisational redesign, professional learning, family engagement, and coordination with external systems rather than a single leadership style. Studies of effective inclusive schools likewise show that principals create enabling conditions through collaborative inquiry, planning, capacity building, and the revision of structures that otherwise reproduce exclusion (DeMatthews, 2021; DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey, & Sharma, 2020). Thus, the central problem is no longer whether leadership matters, but how distinct leadership functions are combined and translated into sustainable school-level practices under different institutional conditions.

This question remains theoretically and empirically contested. One stream of research foregrounds the principal's values, beliefs, and ethical commitment, arguing that leaders' orientations toward disability and diversity shape the expectations, decisions, and cultures that students encounter. Empirical evidence from Greece, for example, indicates that principals' values are associated with their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and inclusive practices (Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023). A second stream emphasises instructional and organisational capacity: vision is necessary but insufficient unless leaders improve teaching, develop staff expertise, align resources, and institutionalise routines for collaborative problem solving (Carrington et al., 2024; DeMatthews et al., 2020; Tanta et al., 2025). A third perspective shifts attention away from the principal as a heroic individual toward distributed and systems-oriented leadership, where expertise is shared and schools rely on networks of families, specialists, district actors, and other institutions to sustain inclusion (DeMatthews, 2021; Scheer, 2021). These perspectives are complementary, but they generate an unresolved question about the mechanism of inclusive leadership: does inclusion primarily depend on leaders' normative commitments, on their instructional-organisational competence, or on their capacity to orchestrate a wider ecology of support? The evidence increasingly suggests that none of these mechanisms is sufficient in isolation.

An integrated theoretical reading is therefore more productive than treating ethical, instructional, transformational, distributed, and social-justice leadership as competing labels. Rights- and justice-oriented perspectives explain why leaders must identify exclusion as an organisational responsibility rather than an individual deficit; instructional leadership explains how this moral purpose is translated into classroom expectations, supervision, curriculum adaptation, and professional learning; distributed leadership explains how responsibility and expertise can be shared across teachers and teams; and systems thinking explains why school-level change can be undermined when external services, policy arrangements, or resource flows remain fragmented. Scheer's (2021) integrated framework is particularly relevant because it positions principal leadership within multilevel governance and processes of recontextualisation, showing that policy is not implemented mechanically but interpreted through local organisational and social conditions. Likewise, comparative evidence from Flanders demonstrates that combinations of leadership practices, rather than isolated behaviours, can help reduce resistance to inclusive reform (Van Mieghem, Verschueren, Donche, & Struyf, 2022). The theoretical opportunity, therefore, lies in clarifying how these leadership logics can be assembled into a context-responsive mechanism that connects rights, instruction, organisational capacity, and inter-organisational support.

The need for such contextualisation is especially visible in Southeast Asia and Indonesia. A regional scoping review found that inclusive schooling across Southeast Asian countries has developed under institutional conditions that differ markedly from those of more mature inclusion systems, with substantial variation in policy implementation, resources, and professional capacity (Hosshan, Stancliffe, Villeneuve, & Bonati, 2020). Indonesian research similarly documents persistent implementation problems in primary schools, including limited teacher understanding and instructional skills, inadequate infrastructure, curriculum and learning challenges, financing constraints, parental involvement, and weak inter-party cooperation (Ediyanto et al., 2023). Research focused directly on school leadership in Indonesian inclusive settings remains comparatively limited and fragmented. For example, existing evidence has examined principal leadership and effective learning in an inclusive high school (Damri et al., 2023), but such work does not yet provide an integrated explanation of how school leaders should connect inclusive pedagogy, reasonable accommodation, professional capacity,

family partnership, and local service systems at the primary-school level. This gap is consequential because policy implementation depends not only on formal mandates but on whether principals can convert those mandates into routines, resources, and relationships that operate in everyday schooling.

Indonesia's current regulatory architecture makes this translation problem particularly salient. Government Regulation No. 13 of 2020 establishes the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for learners with disabilities, while Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 48 of 2023 strengthens provisions for reasonable accommodation and Disability Service Units (Unit Layanan Disabilitas, ULD) across formal education. These regulations shift the leadership task from merely admitting students with disabilities toward organising the conditions that enable equitable participation: identifying support needs, adapting teaching and assessment, planning resources, developing personnel, documenting provision, and connecting schools with specialised services. Yet regulations specify obligations more readily than they explain the school-level leadership architecture needed to enact them. The resulting implementation challenge is therefore a problem of recontextualisation: principals must interpret national rights-based mandates through the actual capacity of their teachers, the resources available to their schools, the responsiveness of external services, and the expectations of families and communities.

North Halmahera provides an analytically informative context for examining this problem because leadership is exercised across a geographically dispersed district in which school and service access cannot be assumed to be uniform. Official regional data document primary schools distributed across the regency's subdistricts, while local government sources also recognise the logistical challenges associated with island and remote areas (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Halmahera Utara, 2026). In such a context, an inclusive leadership model based implicitly on ready access to specialists, stable professional-development infrastructure, and immediate district support may have limited explanatory or practical value. The context therefore functions as more than a geographical location: it creates a boundary condition for leadership. Principals may need to rely more heavily on network leadership, school clusters, shared professional expertise, family knowledge, remote consultation, and tiered district support. This makes North Halmahera theoretically useful for testing the portability of dominant inclusive-leadership assumptions and for identifying which practices remain universal and which require contextual adaptation.

Despite important advances, four related gaps remain. Empirically, research has established that leadership, teacher capacity, collaboration, resources, and inclusive values matter, yet these elements are often examined as separate features rather than as an interdependent school-improvement mechanism. Theoretically, existing leadership traditions explain different parts of the inclusion process but provide limited guidance on how rights-based purpose, instructional leadership, distributed responsibility, and systems coordination should be integrated under resource and service constraints. Contextually, the 2026 international systematic review shows that much of the empirical base remains concentrated in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (DeMatthews et al., 2026), raising questions about how well prevailing frameworks travel to Indonesian and archipelagic settings. Methodologically, the literature is dominated by descriptive and case-based accounts, while policy requirements such as reasonable accommodation and ULD are rarely synthesised directly with international leadership evidence to generate a context-specific, operational framework. More importantly, existing Indonesian scholarship has not sufficiently connected what principals value, what they do instructionally, how they build teacher capacity, how they govern reasonable accommodation, and how they mobilise external support as parts of a single explanatory architecture.

To address these limitations, the present study develops a context-responsive synthesis of inclusive principal leadership for primary schools in North Halmahera. The study advances existing research in three respects. First, it integrates ethical and rights-based leadership, inclusive instructional leadership, teacher-capacity development, resource governance, distributed/network leadership, and data-informed improvement into a coherent six-dimensional model rather than treating these practices as independent checklists. Second, it explicitly connects international inclusive-leadership scholarship with Indonesia's contemporary reasonable-accommodation and ULD policy architecture, thereby clarifying the policy-to-practice mechanisms through which principals can operationalise inclusion. Third, it conceptualises geographic dispersion and uneven service availability as theoretically relevant boundary conditions that increase the importance of networked and tiered support. The proposed Contextual Inclusive Leadership Model for North Halmahera (Kepemimpinan Inklusif Kontekstual Halmahera Utara, KIK-HU) is thus intended as a propositional framework for subsequent empirical validation, not as a claim that one universal leadership configuration will fit every school.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify the leadership dimensions required to move primary schools from formal access toward meaningful inclusion, examine how Indonesia's reasonable-accommodation and ULD mandates can be translated into school-level leadership practices, and integrate these dimensions into a context-responsive framework for North Halmahera. It addresses three research questions: (RQ1) What leadership

dimensions are most salient for developing and sustaining meaningful inclusion in primary schools? (RQ2) How can reasonable accommodation and ULD policy mandates be translated into concrete school-level leadership practices? and (RQ3) How can these dimensions be integrated into a contextual leadership model that responds to the organisational, geographic, and service conditions of North Halmahera? By answering these questions, the study seeks to extend inclusive leadership theory through a policy-sensitive and context-responsive synthesis, provide an empirical agenda for validating the proposed dimensions in understudied Indonesian settings, and offer school and district leaders a more operational basis for aligning leadership development, professional learning, resource decisions, inter-agency collaboration, and monitoring with inclusive education goals. Methodologically, the study uses a targeted integrative review not a field study or meta-analysis to compare scholarly and official documentary evidence, derive a six-dimensional conceptual architecture, and specify propositions for subsequent empirical testing.

Method

This study employed an integrative literature review combined with qualitative policy and document analysis and a context-sensitive thematic synthesis. The design reflected the actual evidentiary basis of the study: published research, legislation, government guidance, institutional publications, and contextual documents rather than primary interviews, observations, surveys, or other field data. An integrative review was appropriate because the research questions required heterogeneous forms of evidence to be brought together to identify leadership dimensions associated with meaningful inclusive schooling, interpret Indonesia's policy architecture for reasonable accommodation (akomodasi yang layak; AYL) and Disability Service Units (Unit Layanan Disabilitas; ULD), and develop a context-responsive conceptual framework for North Halmahera (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Torraco, 2016; Snyder, 2019). The unit of analysis was therefore textual evidence contained in scholarly and official documents, while North Halmahera functioned as the substantive contextual lens rather than an empirically sampled case site.

Sources were identified through targeted searches of ERIC, Crossref, and Google Scholar, supplemented by backward citation chaining and searches of official Indonesian regulatory, Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), and UNESCO sources. The search was last updated on 31 August 2026. The principal search string combined ("inclusive education" OR "inclusive school*") AND (principal* OR "school leader*") AND (leadership OR "instructional leadership" OR "distributed leadership") AND (disabilit* OR "special educational needs"). A contextual search combined (Indonesia OR "North Halmahera" OR archipelagic OR remote) with ("inclusive education" OR "reasonable accommodation" OR "Disability Service Unit"). The final corpus comprised 37 documents: 27 substantive scholarly sources, five methodological sources, and five official policy or contextual documents.

Scholarly sources were eligible when they were peer-reviewed empirical studies, scholarly reviews or frameworks, or critical scholarship in English or Indonesian and directly addressed at least one prespecified domain: rights and ethics, inclusive instructional practice, teacher capacity, reasonable accommodation, family or community participation, inter-organisational support, or data-informed improvement. Official documents were eligible when they established a legal duty, service mechanism, or verified contextual condition relevant to North Halmahera. Duplicates, book reviews, brief commentaries, records without verifiable bibliographic metadata, and sources lacking extractable evidence for the research questions were excluded. BPS was retained only as an authoritative contextual data source, not as a substitute for peer-reviewed scholarship. Because the review was purposive and integrative rather than exhaustive, it does not claim PRISMA compliance or an exhaustive identification denominator; final inclusion is reported transparently by source type.

An extraction matrix recorded source type, country or setting, design, participants where reported, leadership practice, policy mechanism, contextual condition, candidate dimension, and confirming or disconfirming evidence. The synthesis proceeded in three stages: line-by-line extraction of leadership and policy-to-practice mechanisms; clustering into descriptive themes; and higher-order integration across the three research questions, following the logic of thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). A dimension was retained when it was conceptually distinct, specified an actionable leadership mechanism, and was supported across more than one source or evidence type. No claim of statistical pooling or thematic saturation is made. Independent duplicate screening and coding were not undertaken; consequently, Cohen's kappa and percentage agreement are not reported. The source-to-theme matrix provides an audit trail, but the absence of an independent agreement statistic remains a limitation.

Evidence types were not treated as equivalent: empirical studies informed observed practices and relationships; conceptual and critical scholarship informed theoretical interpretation and counter-arguments; policy documents defined legal and normative responsibilities; and regional documents informed contextual

interpretation. Claims were kept proportionate to those evidentiary roles. The six dimensions were therefore integrated into KIK-HU as a theory- and policy-informed proposition rather than an empirically validated measurement or causal model. Because only published and publicly available documents were analysed, participant recruitment, informed consent, and human-subject confidentiality procedures were not applicable.

Results and Discussions

Analytical results

The analytical result is a six-dimensional structure, not an estimate of intervention effectiveness. Dimensions were not selected by citation frequency alone; each had to answer at least one research question, identify a distinct leadership mechanism, and connect that mechanism to observable school or system practice. The evidence was strongest for ethical direction, instructional leadership, professional capacity, and collaboration. Direct evidence for data-informed improvement as a specifically inclusive-leadership mechanism was thinner, so that dimension is retained as an enabling proposition to be tested rather than as an established causal component.

The synthesis identifies six interdependent dimensions of principal leadership that are necessary for moving an elementary school from formal access to meaningful inclusion: (1) a rights-based vision and ethical orientation; (2) inclusive instructional leadership; (3) teacher capacity development and distributed expertise; (4) reasonable accommodation and resource governance; (5) collaboration with families, communities, and Disability Service Units (Unit Layanan Disabilitas/ULD); and (6) data-informed monitoring and continuous improvement. The central finding is not simply that each dimension matters in isolation. Rather, inclusive leadership appears to operate as an organisational capability in which moral purpose, instructional work, professional learning, resource decisions, inter-organisational collaboration, and feedback mechanisms reinforce one another. This interpretation is consistent with the growing view that inclusion is a whole-school transformation problem rather than a placement decision (Ainscow, 2020; Ainscow & Viola, 2024), and it aligns with systematic evidence that effective inclusive principals build shared commitment, develop inclusive organisational conditions, and strengthen learning and leadership capacity (DeMatthews, Conroy, & McKenzie, 2026).

The first dimension, a rights-based vision and ethical orientation, provides the normative architecture for the remaining dimensions. In the policy and literature evidence synthesised in the study, the relevant leadership question is whether students with disabilities are treated as full members of the school community whose participation should shape routine decisions about enrolment, class placement, discipline, extracurricular participation, assessment, resource allocation, and communication with families. This goes beyond a declarative commitment to inclusion. A vision becomes consequential only when it changes the criteria by which leaders judge legitimate school practice. Vlachou and Tsirantonaki (2023), for example, show that principals' values are associated with their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and practices concerning disabled students. The present synthesis extends that argument by locating values within a concrete decision chain: rights-based beliefs must be translated into anti-discriminatory procedures, high expectations, respectful language, and explicit responsibility for removing barriers. Viewed through transformational and equity-oriented leadership perspectives, the function of vision is therefore less about rhetorical inspiration than about redefining what counts as acceptable organisational behaviour (Leithwood, 2021).

A second and closely related finding is that inclusion becomes educationally meaningful only when leadership enters the instructional core. The present study positions inclusive instructional leadership as supervision and improvement work that asks whether students with different profiles can access, participate in, and benefit from classroom learning. This includes attention to differentiation, flexible presentation of content, formative assessment, individual support, accessible materials, and the use of student progress information to revise teaching. Such a framing qualifies a common administrative tendency to treat inclusion as a specialised service delivered alongside ordinary instruction. Instead, the synthesis indicates that the principal's instructional role is to make variability in learners a routine consideration in lesson planning, classroom observation, teacher feedback, and academic supervision. This interpretation closely accords with DeMatthews et al. (2020), who identify instructional decision-making as central to principal leadership for students with disabilities, and with Scheer's (2021) integrated framework, which treats the principal's role in inclusive education as multidimensional rather than purely managerial. It is also compatible with Van Mieghem et al. (2022), whose multiple-case analysis suggests that leadership can function as a lever for inclusive education when several enabling conditions operate in combination.

The third dimension concerns teacher capacity and the distribution of expertise. The synthesis indicates that a school is vulnerable when inclusive practice depends on one teacher who is perceived as the only person

capable of supporting students with disabilities. This concentration of expertise creates a structural bottleneck: responsibility may be informally transferred away from classroom teachers, continuity becomes fragile when the specialist is absent or moves, and professional learning remains peripheral to the wider school. In contrast, the KIK-HU logic treats competence development as an organisational learning process that can include professional learning communities, coaching, lesson study, peer observation, case-based reflection, and collaborative development of adaptive materials. This finding is particularly relevant to the Indonesian literature, which repeatedly identifies teacher competence and uneven implementation capacity as persistent constraints in inclusive education (Ediyanto et al., 2023; Riowati, Hendriani, & Paramita, 2022). Carrington et al. (2024) provide a useful point of comparison by showing how transformative leadership can support professional learning for inclusive practice. The present synthesis refines this argument for the school-level governance context by emphasising that capacity should be deliberately distributed through routines and teams rather than accumulated in a single individual.

The fourth dimension, reasonable accommodation and resource governance, shifts the discussion from whether resources are sufficient to how needs are identified, prioritised, and responded to. The policy framework established by Government Regulation No. 13 of 2020 and Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 48 of 2023 establishes reasonable accommodation as an entitlement, not an optional programme. The analysis therefore treats accommodation as a management process that links identified barriers with feasible adjustments in instruction, assessment, communication, time, classroom arrangement, physical access, assistive tools, or professional support. Importantly, the present study does not equate inclusion with expensive procurement. Some accommodations can be achieved through changes in routines and pedagogy, whereas others require budgeting, infrastructure, or external expertise. The leadership implication is that scarcity should trigger prioritisation and coordination rather than automatic exclusion. This interpretation is important because it relocates the resource problem from a binary condition of 'available versus unavailable' to a governance question concerning whether school leaders can map barriers, combine internal and external resources, and document whether accommodations actually improve access and participation.

The fifth dimension extends leadership beyond the organisational boundary of the school. The evidence synthesised in the study treats families as knowledge partners and ULD as part of a wider support infrastructure. Family participation is analytically important because parents and caregivers may hold information about communication patterns, health-related needs, successful support strategies, and student aspirations that cannot be inferred from school records alone. Crisol-Moya et al. (2022) similarly demonstrate the importance of inclusive leadership from the family perspective. The contribution of the current synthesis is to connect this relational dimension to a concrete governance mechanism: family knowledge should inform the identification, design, review, and adjustment of support rather than be confined to one-way communication. At the same time, the ULD framework expands the principal's role from internal school management to network leadership. Where schools cannot independently provide assessment, assistive technology, specialist consultation, or targeted capacity building, the leader must identify the need, initiate referral or consultation, ensure follow-up, and translate recommendations into classroom practice. This is especially consequential in settings where expertise and services are unevenly distributed.

The sixth dimension, data-informed monitoring and continuous improvement, gives the model a feedback mechanism. The synthesis proposes that school leaders should not judge the success of inclusion solely by enrolment counts or the existence of formal policies. More informative indicators include attendance, classroom participation, access to accommodation, learning progress, participation in school activities, incidents of bullying or discrimination, family feedback, teacher learning needs, and the completion of referral follow-up. This approach is consistent with Ainscow's (2020) emphasis on identifying and reducing barriers to presence, participation, and achievement. It also changes the function of data: rather than using information primarily to classify students, leaders use it to locate changeable barriers in teaching, school routines, relationships, and access conditions. When these indicators are reviewed collectively, data can connect classroom experience to school planning and, in turn, to district-level support.

Table 1. Six dimensions of the KIK-HU leadership configuration

Dimension	Core leadership question	Indicative practices
Rights-based vision and ethics	Do school decisions recognise every child as a full member of the school community?	Inclusive vision; non-discrimination; high expectations; student voice; dignified communication.
Inclusive instructional leadership	Can diverse learners access and participate meaningfully in teaching and assessment?	Inclusive supervision; differentiation; formative assessment; individual support; case-based reflection.

Dimension	Core leadership question	Indicative practices
Teacher capacity and distributed expertise	Is inclusive competence spread across the school and continuously developed?	Professional learning communities; coaching; lesson study; inclusion team; peer learning.
Reasonable accommodation and resources	Are concrete barriers identified and matched with appropriate accommodations?	Barrier mapping; accommodation plans; accessibility; needs-based budgeting; documentation and review.
Family, community, and ULD networks	Is the school connected to families and the district support system?	Family partnership; ULD referral; specialist networks; school clusters; cross-sector collaboration.
Data and continuous improvement	Are decisions informed by evidence of participation, experience, and student progress?	Inclusion indicators; periodic review; follow-up; accommodation evaluation; data-informed planning.

Cross-study convergence and limits

Comparative engagement across 18 empirical studies spanning Indonesia, the United States, Australia, Belgium, Greece, Spain, Hong Kong, and Ghana shows convergence without demonstrating a single universal configuration. Values and justice-oriented commitments shape expectations and resistance to exclusion (DeMatthews, 2015b, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023); instructional leadership, distributed expertise, and sustained professional learning enable classroom enactment (Carrington et al., 2024; DeMatthews, 2015a, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2020; Duncan et al., 2021; Tanta et al., 2025; Van Mieghem et al., 2022); and family, contextual, and organisational evidence demonstrates that networks and local conditions alter what leaders can accomplish (Crisol-Moya et al., 2022; Damri et al., 2023; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Ediyanto et al., 2023; Khaleel et al., 2021; Opoku-Nkoom & Ackah-Jnr, 2023; Poon-McBrayer, 2017). None of these studies tests all six KIK-HU dimensions together. Their interdependence is therefore an analytical proposition grounded in cross-study convergence, not an observed effect or causal estimate.

Taken together, these six dimensions answer the first research question by indicating that the most important leadership dimensions are not a menu from which principals select one preferred style. They form a coordinated configuration. A rights-based vision without instructional change risks becoming symbolic; instructional adaptation without teacher capacity is difficult to sustain; accommodation without family and specialist input may be poorly matched to need; and all of these practices can stagnate when no data are used to review their consequences. The higher-order insight is therefore that inclusive school leadership should be conceptualised as the orchestration of interdependent organisational conditions. This interpretation supports prior multidimensional accounts of inclusive principal leadership (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Scheer, 2021) while extending them by explicitly integrating Indonesian policy instruments on reasonable accommodation and ULD into the leadership architecture.

The analysis addressing the second research question shows that the policy mandates on reasonable accommodation and ULD become meaningful only when principals convert them into recurring school routines. The key distinction is between formal compliance and operational enactment. A school may recognise the legal right to inclusion, yet students can still encounter barriers if needs are not identified, responsibilities remain unclear, budget decisions do not reflect those needs, teachers receive no practical support, and external recommendations are not followed through. Accordingly, the leadership task is best understood as institutional translation: national rights and service provisions must be converted into procedures, assignments, instructional adjustments, documentation, and review mechanisms that are visible in everyday school practice.

For reasonable accommodation, this translation begins with the systematic identification of barriers rather than with a pre-determined list of purchases. The relevant unit of analysis is the mismatch between the learner and the school environment: physical access, communication, instructional presentation, task demands, assessment formats, time allocation, classroom participation, and social interaction can each become a barrier depending on the student and the context. Once identified, these barriers need to be connected to specific adjustments and assigned responsibilities. This creates a management cycle of identification, planning, resourcing, implementation, monitoring, and revision. In this sense, reasonable accommodation should not be treated as an additional responsibility attached to one teacher; it is an organisational responsibility that must be integrated into school planning and governance. This interpretation is consistent with the broader international literature that locates inclusion in changes to policy, culture, and practice rather than in the characteristics of the student alone (Ainscow, 2020; Ainscow & Viola, 2024).

The ULD mandate introduces a second translation problem: the existence of a support structure does not automatically produce usable support at school level. The synthesis therefore qualifies a purely structural reading of ULD implementation. What matters for school leadership is whether the relationship with ULD functions as

a working service pathway. At minimum, this requires a designated school contact point, a mechanism for referral or consultation, sufficiently clear information about the student's needs, documentation of recommendations, and responsibility for follow-up. The principal's role is not to replace disability specialists, but to make specialist input organisationally consequential. A consultation that remains outside classroom planning has limited value; a recommendation becomes educationally meaningful only when it alters teaching, assessment, accessibility, or the support provided to the learner.

This point brings network leadership into the centre of policy enactment. Schools, especially primary schools in geographically dispersed districts, cannot reasonably be expected to possess every form of specialist expertise. The present study therefore proposes that leadership capacity includes the ability to connect school-level needs with ULD, district education offices, health or social services, universities, disability organisations, and other relevant partners. This proposition resonates with the systems orientation identified by DeMatthews (2021), who argues that inclusive leadership involves undoing established systems of exclusion rather than addressing isolated problems. It also complements the regional literature on inclusive schooling in Southeast Asia, where system-level coordination and capacity remain uneven (Hosshan et al., 2020). For North Halmahera, the implication is not that a particular network arrangement has already been empirically demonstrated across all schools, but that the district context makes network capacity a plausible boundary condition for effective policy enactment.

Family collaboration operates as a further mechanism linking policy to practice. The synthesis indicates that reasonable accommodation should be reviewed with, rather than merely communicated to, families. This is significant because the effectiveness of an accommodation cannot always be inferred from formal completion. A modified task may still exclude a student socially; a physical facility may technically exist but remain unusable; a referral may be completed administratively without producing a change in participation. Family feedback and, where appropriate, student voice provide information about whether the intended support works in lived practice. This extends the family-leadership relationship described by Crisol-Moya et al. (2022) by connecting participation directly to the design and evaluation of accommodation.

Table 2. From policy mandate to school-level leadership practice

Policy/organisational mandate	Leadership translation	Evidence of enactment
Non-discrimination and equal educational rights	Embed inclusive principles in enrolment, placement, discipline, learning opportunities, and school communication.	Non-discriminatory procedures; documented decisions; feedback or complaint records.
Reasonable accommodation	Identify barriers, decide appropriate adjustments, allocate resources, implement, document, and review.	Accommodation plans; accessible learning/assessment adjustments; accessibility audits; review records.
ULD as a support system	Establish referral, consultation, follow-up, and shared capacity-building mechanisms.	Referral logs; consultation notes; recommendations; evidence of classroom or organisational follow-up.
Family participation	Include families in identifying needs, planning support, and reviewing outcomes.	Meeting notes; jointly reviewed support plans; family feedback.
Data-informed accountability	Monitor participation and access indicators and use them in school planning and district communication.	Attendance/participation data; RKS/RKAS linkage; review minutes; follow-up actions.

A further qualification concerns geography and unequal service access. The study proposes school clustering as a context-responsive mechanism through which nearby schools could share learning resources, mentors, accessible materials, and consultation opportunities, including remote consultation where direct specialist support is difficult to obtain. The value of this proposal lies in the way it reframes resource inequality. Rather than assuming that each school must become self-sufficient before inclusion can improve, the cluster approach treats interdependence as a legitimate organisational strategy. This is consistent with distributed leadership logic because expertise can be shared across institutional boundaries, but it also adds a district-level network dimension that is not always explicit in school-based leadership models. Because the proposed cluster mechanism is conceptual rather than empirically tested in the evidence supplied, it should be interpreted as a testable design proposition for North Halmahera, not as an established effect.

Overall, the second research question is answered by showing that AYL and ULD mandates are translated through an institutional cycle rather than through a single administrative decision. Principals must connect rights to needs assessment, needs to accommodations, accommodations to resources and professional practice, external support to classroom follow-through, and implementation evidence to ongoing review. This suggests that the principal acts as both an institutional translator and a network coordinator. The theoretical implication is that inclusive leadership in this context cannot be fully explained by within-school influence alone; it also depends on the leader's capacity to activate and integrate support located outside the school.

The third research question concerns how the identified dimensions can be assembled into a contextual model for North Halmahera. The synthesis results in the Contextual Inclusive Leadership Model for North Halmahera (Kepemimpinan Inklusif Kontekstual Halmahera Utara; KIK-HU), a six-dimensional, cyclical architecture that links moral purpose to instructional practice and connects school-level change to a wider support ecosystem. The model is deliberately not framed as a fixed standard or a replacement for national regulation. Its purpose is translational: it organises the relationship between inclusive values, teaching and learning, professional capacity, reasonable accommodation, networked support, and evidence-based improvement in a form that can guide local implementation.

The cyclical relationship among the dimensions is the model's principal analytical feature. Rights-based vision provides the decision rule for inclusion; inclusive instructional leadership identifies where participation is being constrained in teaching and assessment; teacher capacity determines whether adaptations can be implemented consistently; reasonable accommodation and resource governance address concrete barriers; family and ULD networks extend the school's problem-solving capacity; and data provide feedback about whether the combined actions are producing better access, participation, safety, belonging, and learning. The cycle then returns to leadership decisions, because evidence of persistent exclusion requires the organisation to revise its assumptions, priorities, or routines. This feedback structure prevents the model from becoming a checklist. A school may, for example, possess an inclusion team but still need to revise its practice if participation data indicate that students remain marginalised.

In theoretical terms, KIK-HU integrates several leadership traditions without collapsing them into a generic 'inclusive style'. The rights-based dimension draws on ethical and social justice leadership; the change in shared expectations reflects transformational leadership; the attention to teaching and supervision reflects instructional leadership; the distribution of expertise and formation of inclusion teams reflect distributed leadership; and the ULD and cluster components introduce a network leadership function. This integration is compatible with Scheer's (2021) argument that the principal's role in inclusive education is best understood through an integrated framework. KIK-HU extends that position in two specific ways. First, it makes Indonesia's policy instruments on reasonable accommodation and ULD explicit components of the leadership model rather than treating external support as a background condition. Second, it treats uneven access to expertise as a contextual feature that may be addressed through shared and tiered support rather than through school-level self-sufficiency.

The model also refines the relationship between leadership and context. Context is not treated merely as the geographic location in which a universal model is applied. In North Halmahera, the distribution of schools, differences in service access, variable professional capacity, and the need for coordination with district structures potentially shape which leadership practices are feasible and how quickly they can be institutionalised. This does not justify lowering the normative standard of inclusion. Rights, non-discrimination, participation, and reasonable accommodation remain constant. What varies is the organisational pathway through which schools secure the capacity to meet those standards. The distinction between stable principles and context-sensitive implementation is therefore central to the model's logic.

Table 3. Proposed implementation roadmap for KIK-HU

Phase	Primary focus	Main outputs	Early indicators
0-6 months: foundation	Inclusion audit; mapping of students and barriers; inclusion team; rights/AYL orientation; ULD network mapping.	School barrier profile; team mandate; service procedures; teacher learning needs list.	Priority needs identified; school staff understand support mechanisms; ULD contact/referral pathway available.
6-18 months: strengthening practice	Professional learning communities; inclusive supervision; development and review of accommodations; family	Documented adapted lessons and accommodations; teacher learning agenda; family forum; operational referrals.	Improved participation; accommodations reviewed; problems followed up through school teams or networks.

Phase	Primary focus	Main outputs	Early indicators
	partnership; cluster collaboration.		
18-36 months: institutionalisation	Integration into RKS/RKAS; leadership succession; impact review; inter-school sharing; stronger district support.	Embedded school policy; indicator dashboard; mentors/inter-school community; district recommendations.	Practice less dependent on one person; data used for planning; support network becomes more stable.

The roadmap derived from the synthesis further clarifies that model implementation is developmental rather than instantaneous. The first phase establishes a baseline by mapping barriers, clarifying responsibilities, and locating available support. The second phase moves the model into instructional and professional routines through teacher learning, inclusive supervision, accommodation review, family partnership, and functional referrals. The third phase concerns institutionalisation: inclusive practices are incorporated into school planning and budgeting, leadership capacity is distributed and renewed, inter-school learning is stabilised, and monitoring evidence is used for district planning. This progression is analytically important because it distinguishes initial adoption from organisational sustainability. A programme can be present without being institutionalised; sustainability requires routines, documentation, distributed competence, and a feedback system that survive personnel changes.

The monitoring indicators proposed in the synthesis are equally important to the model because they define inclusion in terms of experienced participation rather than symbolic compliance. The proposed minimum areas include non-discriminatory access, classroom participation and belonging, reasonable accommodation and accessibility, teacher capacity, family collaboration, safety and non-discrimination, functional service networks, and evidence-based improvement. These indicators are not presented as an accreditation instrument. Their function is diagnostic: they give school leaders a way to ask whether formal commitments are changing students' lived experiences. This distinction matters theoretically because it aligns leadership evaluation with the substantive object of inclusion removing barriers to presence, participation, and learning rather than with the mere existence of structures or policies (Ainscow, 2020).

The model's contribution should nevertheless be stated proportionately. KIK-HU is propositional. The evidence synthesised in the study supports the conceptual integration of six dimensions and the rationale for a context-responsive implementation architecture, but it does not establish that the model has already produced specified outcomes across elementary schools in North Halmahera. This limitation is especially important because the international studies informing the synthesis were conducted in education systems with different service structures, resources, and professional roles (e.g., DeMatthews et al., 2020; Van Mieghem et al., 2022). The appropriate next step is therefore empirical validation across multiple school sites, using evidence from principals, teachers, students, families, ULD personnel, district officials, classroom observations, accessibility audits, and school planning documents. Such work would test whether the six dimensions are empirically distinguishable, how they interact under varying school conditions, and which elements constitute boundary conditions for effective implementation.

Interpretive discussion

Across the three research questions, a higher-order pattern emerges: the principal's contribution to inclusive elementary schooling is best understood as ecosystem orchestration rather than individual heroic agency. The synthesis does not diminish the importance of principal commitment; instead, it specifies the organisational work through which commitment becomes consequential. The principal sets and protects a rights-based direction, keeps inclusion connected to the instructional core, develops collective professional capacity, governs accommodations and resources, activates family and external support networks, and uses evidence to revise practice. Inclusive leadership therefore becomes visible in the architecture of relationships and routines that the leader creates, not merely in personal attitudes or episodic initiatives.

This integrative interpretation advances the literature in three ways. First, it reinforces the shift from access to participation. International work has long argued that inclusion cannot be reduced to the physical placement of students with disabilities in mainstream settings (Ainscow, 2020; Ainscow & Viola, 2024). KIK-HU operationalises that position within school leadership by making participation, belonging, accessibility, and learning progress central objects of management and monitoring. The practical consequence is significant: a school cannot infer success from enrolment alone when students remain socially isolated, instructionally excluded, or unable to access assessment and school activities.

A critical reading also tempers a purely technocratic account of inclusion. Artiles (2011) shows that disability classification and educational equity are shaped by intersecting histories and power relations, while Slee (2018)

warns that inclusive language can coexist with structures that continue to exclude. KIK-HU therefore does not assume that coordination is inherently inclusive: distributed or network leadership may reproduce inequity when students and families lack decision-making authority, when data measure compliance rather than lived participation, or when accommodation depends on discretionary goodwill. Rights, student voice, and family participation must operate as evaluative checks on managerial routines. Competing explanations resource scarcity, centralised governance, discriminatory norms, teacher workload, or inaccessible external services may also account for implementation failure independently of principal competence. The proposed interaction among dimensions should therefore be treated as a falsifiable hypothesis, with alternative mechanisms examined in future studies.

Second, the synthesis specifies policy enactment as a leadership mechanism. The rights and service architecture created by Indonesian disability and education policy becomes actionable only when leaders translate it into school routines. This is where the model adds a contextual refinement to international inclusive leadership frameworks. In contexts where specialist support is embedded within the school, leadership scholarship can focus primarily on internal coordination. In North Halmahera and similar settings, however, part of the principal's work may occur across organisational boundaries. ULD, district offices, families, health and social services, universities, and inter-school clusters potentially become part of the school's instructional support system. The boundary of leadership is therefore porous: educational improvement depends partly on the leader's capacity to mobilise resources that are not under direct school control.

Third, sustainability emerges as a problem of institutionalisation rather than initial motivation. The synthesis repeatedly points to risks associated with dependence on one knowledgeable teacher, one committed principal, one-off training, or informal personal networks. These arrangements may generate short-term progress but remain fragile. The KIK-HU response is to distribute expertise, formalise inclusion teams, embed reasonable accommodation in planning and budgeting, establish documented referral pathways, review a small set of inclusion indicators, and develop school-to-school learning mechanisms. This is consistent with evidence that inclusive leadership involves building organisational conditions and leadership capacity, not merely expressing support for inclusion (DeMatthews et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2026). It also helps explain why leadership development for inclusion should be problem-based and practice-connected: principals need not become disability specialists, but they do need the organisational and network competencies required to ensure that expertise reaches classrooms.

The synthesis also produces an important qualification to resource-based explanations of inclusive implementation. Resource constraints remain real, particularly where infrastructure, specialist services, and professional expertise are uneven. However, the model indicates that 'resources' should not be treated as a single exogenous variable that either enables or prevents inclusion. Some barriers can be reduced through pedagogical adjustment, scheduling, communication, peer support, or reorganisation; others require expenditure or specialist intervention. Leadership matters because it shapes whether schools identify this distinction, prioritise the most consequential barriers, combine internal and external resources, and review whether the chosen response works. The model therefore neither romanticises low-resource implementation nor treats scarcity as a sufficient explanation for exclusion.

Taken together, the findings support a contextual conception of inclusive school leadership in which universal principles are held constant while implementation mechanisms are adapted to local capacity and service conditions. The six dimensions answer what principals need to organise; the AYL-ULD analysis explains how national mandates can enter school practice; and the KIK-HU architecture explains how these elements can be linked into a developmental and monitorable system. The resulting contribution is a contextual refinement rather than a claim of universal theory replacement. It provides a theoretically informed structure for examining inclusive leadership in a district where schools may differ in access, capacity, and external support, and it generates specific propositions for subsequent multisite empirical testing. Most importantly, it reframes the central leadership problem: the question is not whether a principal supports inclusion in principle, but whether the school and its surrounding support network have been organised so that diverse students can participate, learn, belong, and receive appropriate accommodation in sustained and observable ways.

Conclusions

This targeted integrative review examined how principal leadership can translate inclusive-education mandates into school-level practice in North Halmahera. Across 37 documents 27 substantive scholarly sources, five methodological sources, and five official policy or contextual documents the synthesis identified six dimensions: rights-based vision and ethics; inclusive instructional leadership; teacher-capacity development; reasonable accommodation and resource governance; family, community, and ULD networks; and data-informed

continuous improvement. The hierarchy is conditional rather than causal. Rights-based vision is foundational because it defines non-discrimination and participation as decision criteria. Instructional leadership, teacher capacity, and accommodation form the operational core that changes classroom access. Networks become more consequential where specialist services are dispersed, while data provide the feedback needed to revise all other dimensions. KIK-HU therefore positions the principal as an ecosystem orchestrator, but it remains a conceptual proposition. The review found convergence around the six dimensions across 18 empirical studies, yet no included study tested them together as a causal configuration; no effect size or variance estimate is consequently reported. The model should not be treated as a validated intervention or a universal sequence. For practice, schools should begin with a barrier-focused inclusion audit, embed reasonable accommodation in supervision, planning, and budgeting, and formalise family and ULD referral and follow-up. District authorities should support school clusters, consultation pathways, and shared specialist resources. Future research should conduct multisite qualitative studies across contrasting geographic and service-access conditions, validate measures for the six dimensions, and use longitudinal or multilevel designs to test whether leadership changes precede improvements in accommodation, participation, belonging, safety, and learning. These studies should also test whether power asymmetries, resource scarcity, or centralised governance constrain the model. KIK-HU's contribution is thus a transparent, policy-sensitive framework for empirical testing, not evidence that the proposed configuration has already produced outcomes in North Halmahera.

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