



Optimizing inclusive human resource management at the laboratory elementary school

Author Name(s): Besse Marhawati, Arifin Arifin, Sulkifly Sulkifly

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Optimizing inclusive human resource management at the laboratory elementary school

Besse Marhawati¹⁾, Arifin Arifin, Sulkifly Sulkifly

Departement of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the optimization of human resource management (HRM) in an inclusive elementary school at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University, focusing on planning, professional development, performance evaluation, and compensation. Using a qualitative case study, data were collected from principals, regular and special education teachers, administrative staff, and parents through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Findings indicate that HR planning is flexible and data-driven but remains reactive due to limited forecasting and formally trained staff. Professional development strengthens teacher competence through collaborative workshops, yet sustainability depends on integrating programs into school policy. Performance evaluation emphasizes formative feedback but lacks standardized criteria for inclusion-specific competencies, and compensation relies heavily on intrinsic motivation with minimal non-financial recognition. The study highlights that effective inclusive HRM requires systemic alignment across pedagogical, emotional, and institutional domains, balancing professional competence with teacher well-being, and offers practical insights for policy and school-level strategies to sustain inclusive education in the Indonesian context.



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Corresponding Author:

Besse Marhawati,
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo,
Email: bessemarhawati@ung.ac.id

Introduction

Inclusive education has become a global movement that guarantees every child, including those with special needs, equal access to quality learning opportunities within regular schools (Thomas, 1997; Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024). In Indonesia, this agenda aligns strongly with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) and the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which mandates education to be democratic, equitable, and non-discriminatory (Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023; Novrizal & Manaf, 2024). Despite these frameworks, implementation remains uneven, especially regarding human resource management (HRM) practices that are critical to sustaining inclusive classrooms (Murtadlo & Hazin, 2018; Ghufron, 2024).

One major barrier to effective inclusion is the shortage of teachers with adequate pedagogical and psychological competencies to address diverse learning needs (Chow, Deng, & Forlin, 2024; Soeharto, Subasi Singh, & Afriyanti, 2024). Studies highlight that insufficient teacher training and weak school-based HR planning hinder the achievement of inclusion targets in Indonesia (Hata, 2021). Continuous, context-sensitive professional development is essential to prepare teachers for inclusive classrooms (Fatima, Rafiq-uz-Zaman, Arshad, & Rasheed, 2025).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic lever in the success and sustainability of inclusive education (Prieto, 2023; Mahade & Nair, 2025). Schools that implement HRM practices such as targeted recruitment, competency-based professional development, and comprehensive evaluation demonstrate stronger institutional capacity and higher teacher commitment (Permatasari & Tandiyuk, 2023; Polat & Turhaner, 2024).

Effective HRM in inclusive schools requires balancing administrative efficiency with emotional engagement, as teachers must show empathy, patience, and adaptive instructional strategies to meet diverse student needs (Clores, 2025; Anwar, Suwarno, & Harianti, 2023). Without such alignment, inclusion policies risk remaining symbolic rather than translating into classroom impact.

In Indonesia, inclusive schools still face structural and managerial challenges, including limited funding, weak school-parent collaboration, and underdeveloped evaluation mechanisms for teachers working with students with special needs (Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023; Sari, Sarofah, & Fadli, 2022). These barriers underline the importance of designing HRM strategies tailored to the needs of inclusive education rather than relying solely on general administrative procedures (Kabuuka, 2022; Hoque, 2024).

Integrating HRM with digital tools has been suggested as a way to enhance accountability, monitor teacher performance, and support data-driven decision-making in inclusive classrooms (Ghufron, 2024; Rachmadtullah, Zulela, & Rukiyati, 2025). Such approaches can strengthen planning, development, and evaluation processes while fostering transparency in teacher performance assessment.

The Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University serves as an instructive case for examining inclusive HRM in practice. The school admits students with special needs based on collaborative assessments with the Provincial Autism Service Center, reflecting institutional commitment to equity while also revealing challenges in recruitment, training, evaluation, and compensation (Murtdalo & Prihatin, 2024).

Given these dynamics, this study investigates how HRM practices including planning, professional development, performance evaluation, and compensation are implemented at the Laboratory Elementary School to support inclusive education. By examining these processes, the research aims to identify both successes and systemic gaps that influence teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.

Ultimately, understanding HRM in this context provides practical insights for designing policies and school-level interventions that strengthen the sustainability of inclusive education in Indonesia. The study emphasizes the need for an integrated HRM approach that combines pedagogical competence, emotional engagement, and institutional support to foster a truly inclusive school culture.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore human resource management (HRM) practices in an inclusive elementary school context, focusing on the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University. A qualitative approach was selected to capture participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings in their natural settings, allowing the study to uncover the complex interactions between leadership, policy, and classroom practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The case study method is particularly suitable for examining HRM processes in schools that serve as regional models for inclusive education (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2018).

The study context is a laboratory elementary school that implements inclusive education principles and accommodates students with diverse learning needs. Students with special needs are admitted

based on collaborative assessments with the Provincial Autism Service Center (Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023; Sari, Sarofah, & Fadli, 2022), providing a relevant setting to examine inclusive HRM strategies.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to HRM practices. They included the principal, vice principal for academic affairs, regular and special education teachers, administrative staff, and parents of students with special needs (Murtadlo & Hazin, 2018; Fatima, Rafiq-uz-Zaman, Arshad, & Rasheed, 2025).

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored experiences and perceptions related to HR planning, teacher recruitment, professional development, performance evaluation, and compensation (Ghufron, 2024; Mahade & Nair, 2025). Observations captured real-time classroom interactions and administrative practices (Chow, Deng, & Forlin, 2024; Soeharto, Subasi Singh, & Afriyanti, 2024). Documents reviewed included workload reports, professional development plans, evaluation forms, and policy records. Triangulation across these sources strengthened the validity and credibility of findings (Rachmadtullah, Zulela, & Rukiyati, 2025; Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024).

Data analysis followed Miles et al. (2018) interactive model, comprising data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns within HRM components, and findings were presented through matrices and narrative summaries to highlight relationships among categories (Ionescu, 2022; Prieto, 2023).

Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, peer debriefing, and thick description of the research context to support transferability (Fatima et al., 2025; Ghufron, 2024; Murtadlo & Prihatin, 2024). Dependability and confirmability were addressed via audit trails documenting all research steps.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Gorontalo State University. Participants provided written consent, were informed of their rights, and confidentiality was ensured through pseudonyms. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any stage without consequence (Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024; Thomas, 1997).

Limitations of the study include a focus on a single school, which may affect generalizability, and potential response bias in interviews. However, by combining multiple data sources and rigorous analytical procedures, the study provides a robust and contextually grounded understanding of inclusive HRM practices.

Results and Discussions

This study explored the implementation of human resource management (HRM) practices in the context of inclusive education at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University. The study identified four interrelated themes: (1) inclusive human resource planning, (2) professional development for inclusive teachers, (3) performance evaluation mechanisms, and (4) compensation and motivation systems. Each theme reflects how the school's HRM processes are adapted to support the inclusion of students with diverse learning needs.

Inclusive Human Resource Planning System at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University

The results indicate that the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University has consistently aligned its human resource (HR) planning with the principles of inclusive education. The HR planning process begins with an annual needs analysis based on student enrollment data and individualized assessments conducted in collaboration with the Provincial Autism Service Center. Recruitment emphasizes candidates who demonstrate empathy, openness to diversity, and a collaborative spirit, rather than relying solely on formal special-education qualifications, reflecting a growing trend in inclusive HRM that values emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity as essential competencies for inclusive educators (Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024; Soeharto, Subasi Singh, & Afriyanti, 2024).

Despite these efforts, structural limitations persist, particularly the shortage of teachers with formal training in inclusive pedagogy. The headmaster noted that “inclusive staffing is mostly reactive,

depending on the number of students with special needs each year,” suggesting that HR planning remains largely adaptive rather than strategic. This pattern is consistent with other Indonesian contexts, where inclusive staffing often lacks long-term forecasting mechanisms (Murtadlo & Hazin, 2018; Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023). Scholars argue that effective educational HR planning should anticipate future needs using data-driven modeling and competency mapping, rather than short-term adjustments (Hoque, 2024; Kabuuka, 2022). Nevertheless, the school’s flexible recruitment and data-oriented planning illustrate an emergent form of strategic inclusivity, blending administrative pragmatism with humanistic values (Ghufron, 2024; Prieto, 2023).

In practice, inclusive HR planning at the Laboratory School represents a hybrid model, combining top-down directives from the university foundation with bottom-up initiatives developed by teachers and academic coordinators. This adaptive planning process exemplifies inclusive leadership, where decision-making is collaborative, transparent, and responsive to evolving classroom dynamics (Polat & Turhaner, 2024). The model also aligns with adaptive HRM theory, which emphasizes organizational flexibility and emotional engagement as key drivers of school resilience (Permatasari & Tandiayuk, 2023; Mahade & Nair, 2025).

Teacher professional development (PD) is central to the Laboratory School’s HRM strategy. PD activities occur through three main formats: in-house workshops on inclusive pedagogy and differentiated instruction, collaborative seminars with the Faculty of Education, and peer-learning sessions in which teachers share classroom practices. These initiatives enhance teacher confidence and competence in designing individualized learning plans and adaptive assessments. One teacher remarked, “Before attending the workshops, I was unsure how to handle students with autism; now I can adapt lessons and use communication strategies that help them stay engaged,” which aligns with findings highlighting the importance of practical, experience-based PD for inclusive classrooms (Fatima, Rafiq-uz-Zaman, Arshad, & Rasheed, 2025; Chow, Deng, & Forlin, 2024).

However, PD programs are often irregular and dependent on university-led initiatives, rather than being systematically embedded in school policy. This reflects a broader challenge in Indonesia, where PD for inclusive education is largely project-based and lacks institutional continuity (Sari, Sarofah, & Fadli, 2022; Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023). International studies emphasize that sustainable PD should be integrated into the HRM system through continuous mentoring and reflective supervision (Rachmadtullah, Zulela, & Rukiyati, 2025; Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024).

Despite these limitations, collaboration with the Faculty of Education provides a distinctive advantage. The school functions as a living laboratory for inclusive pedagogy, allowing lecturers, pre-service teachers, and practicing educators to co-construct knowledge through shared reflection and action (Ghufron, 2024; Murtadlo & Prihatin, 2024). This professional ecosystem fosters continuous learning and collegial mentorship, supporting the view that teacher competence and professional identity are best developed through ongoing, community-based learning rather than isolated training sessions (Pamungkas, 2025).

In summary, the findings indicate that inclusive HR planning and professional development at the Laboratory School combine strategic adaptability and collaborative innovation. These practices reflect a shift from conventional, compliance-driven management toward a culture of inclusive leadership, integrating emotional intelligence, professional learning, and institutional responsiveness (Polat & Turhaner, 2024; Mahade & Nair, 2025).

These initiatives reflect the school’s strong commitment to building teacher professional capacity through collaborative learning and continuous competence enhancement. As highlighted by Murtadlo and Hazin (2018) and Ghufron (2024), continuous professional development is a fundamental element of HRM in inclusive schools because it allows teachers to update their knowledge, pedagogical skills, and inclusive attitudes contextually. This finding is consistent with Chow, Deng, and Forlin (2024), who argue that inclusive teacher competence development must address not only cognitive dimensions but also emotional intelligence and collaboration.

Inclusive Human Resource Planning System at the Laboratory Elementary School, Gorontalo State University

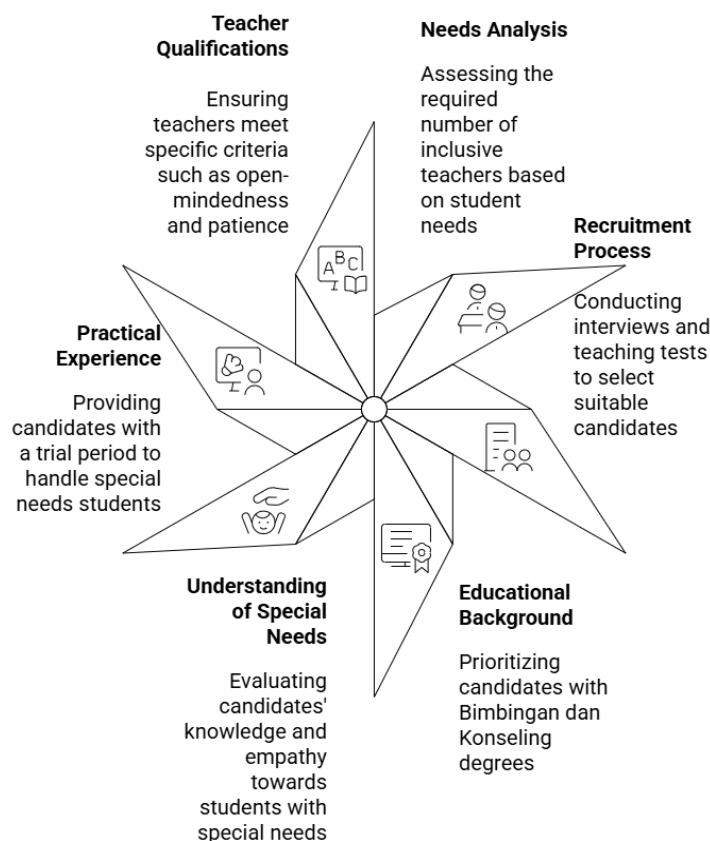


Figure 1. Development of Inclusive Human Resources at the Laboratory Elementary School, Gorontalo City

The principal of SD Lab UNG gives significant attention to improving teachers' capacity in managing inclusive classrooms through systematic training programs. One inclusive teacher stated (W.DN.29.08.2024) that the principal actively ensures all teachers participate in training and workshops, both those organized internally by the school and by external institutions. This approach reflects the practice of distributed leadership in inclusive HRM, where teacher capacity building is implemented collectively and problem-oriented (Polat & Turhaner, 2024; Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024).

The school's professional development activities include technical training focused on adaptive teaching strategies, curriculum differentiation, and the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for PDPD students. Documentation shows that SD Lab teachers actively participate in Inclusive Learning Technical Guidance Programs, organized both by the school and the Gorontalo City Department of Education (D.DS.28.10.2024; D.KS.2023). This practice illustrates an integration between local policy implementation and institutional initiatives aimed at establishing an inclusive ecosystem at the primary school level (Prieto, 2023; Permatasari & Tandiayuk, 2023).

The study also revealed that teacher professional development does not stop at the training stage but is followed by classroom implementation and reflection. One teacher (W.NR.25.09.2024) explained that after attending workshops and technical guidance sessions, teachers apply the strategies they learned in the classroom and evaluate whether the methods used are appropriate for PDPD students. This finding supports Rachmadtullah, Zulela, and Rukiyati (2025), who argue that the effectiveness of teacher professional development depends on post-training mechanisms that encourage reflection and classroom application.

Furthermore, the management of inclusive students at SD Lab UNG is based on assessment results from the Gorontalo Provincial Autism Service Center, which serve as a reference for learning design and individualized interventions (W.LL.25.09.2024). This shows the school's integration of professional assessment results into pedagogical decision-making, representing an evidence-based inclusive management approach as described by [Hoque \(2024\)](#) and [Kabuuka \(2022\)](#).

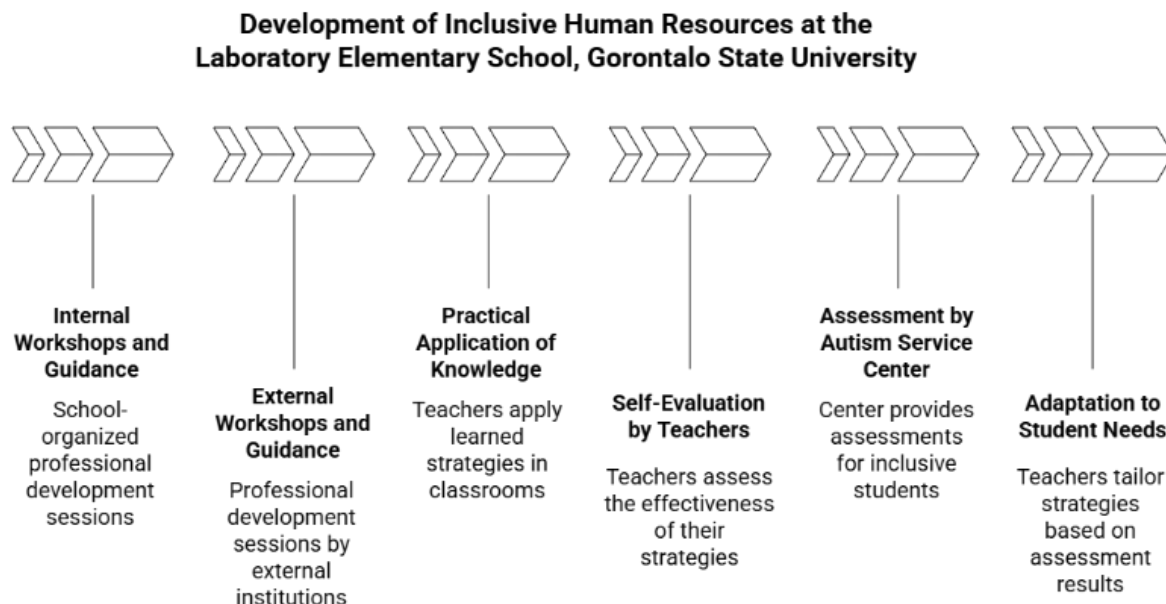


Figure 2. Evaluation of Inclusive Human Resource Performance at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University

Teacher Performance Evaluation and Compensation at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University

The analysis indicates that teacher performance evaluation at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University primarily emphasizes formative feedback rather than summative judgment. Supervisors conduct classroom observations focusing on instructional adaptation, fostering a positive classroom climate, and effective communication with parents. Evaluation sessions are dialogic, allowing teachers to reflect on their professional strengths, challenges, and areas for growth. This approach aligns with the principles of reflective supervision and inclusive leadership, where evaluation fosters self-awareness and collaborative learning rather than serving as punitive accountability ([Polat & Turhaner, 2024](#)).

Despite these strengths, the absence of standardized evaluation criteria for inclusive teaching effectiveness remains a critical gap. Reports largely rely on conventional pedagogical indicators, such as lesson planning and student achievement, while overlooking inclusion-specific competencies like designing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), differentiating instruction for diverse learners, and managing multi-ability classrooms. Similar limitations have been noted in other Indonesian contexts, where traditional appraisal systems fail to capture the emotional, creative, and adaptive dimensions of inclusive pedagogy ([Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023](#); [Sari, Sarofah, & Fadli, 2022](#)).

Teachers highlighted that evaluations often neglect the emotional labor inherent in inclusive teaching. One participant noted, "Our evaluation is often limited to paperwork; the real effort—our patience, empathy, and creativity—is not recorded anywhere." This concern aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of socio-emotional engagement and regulation in inclusive education, which are rarely acknowledged in formal systems ([Llorent & Fernández-Cruz, 2024](#); [Prieto, 2023](#); [Hoque, 2024](#)).

The study suggests developing a context-sensitive evaluation framework that recognizes teachers' socio-emotional contributions, reflective practices, and problem-solving capacities as key performance dimensions ([Ghufon, 2024](#); [Ionescu, 2022](#)). Such a framework would align with international

perspectives viewing inclusive education as relational and affective, not solely instructional (Chow, Deng, & Forlin, 2024; Soeharto, Subasi Singh, & Afriyanti, 2024). The Laboratory School has initiated informal mentoring and peer feedback mechanisms, marking early progress toward a more holistic, inclusive evaluation model (Murtadlo & Prihatin, 2024).

Compensation and motivation are closely intertwined with evaluation in inclusive HRM. While the school complies with government salary standards, additional incentives for inclusive teaching are not systematically implemented. Teachers supporting students with special needs often undertake heavier emotional and cognitive workloads without commensurate financial recognition. Nevertheless, many demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation rooted in moral commitment and empathy, reflecting “values-based motivation” where teachers view their work as moral and humanitarian missions (Clores, 2025; Mahade & Nair, 2025).

However, the lack of tangible recognition can hinder long-term commitment and increase burnout risk (Fatima, Rafiq-uz-Zaman, Arshad, & Rasheed, 2025; Kabuuka, 2022). The study recommends expanding compensation to include non-financial rewards such as professional recognition, career development opportunities, and institutional appreciation programs, consistent with inclusive HRM models emphasizing balanced recognition to sustain teacher performance (Permatasari & Tandiayuk, 2023).

In summary, teacher evaluation and compensation at the Laboratory Elementary School illustrate both progress and ongoing challenges in inclusive HRM. Formative feedback and reflective dialogue support professional growth, but the absence of formal inclusion-based criteria and incentive systems highlights the need for structural reform. The school’s practices demonstrate a transition from bureaucratic evaluation toward an empathetic, participatory HRM framework that values teachers as central agents of inclusive change (Polat & Turhaner, 2024; Ghufron, 2024; Prieto, 2023).

Compensation for Inclusive Human Resources at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University

Compensation and motivation emerged as the most sensitive and complex aspects of human resource management (HRM) in the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University. Although the school adheres to the standardized salary structure set by the Indonesian government, additional incentives specifically designed for inclusive teaching have not yet been systematically implemented. Teachers who supervise students with special needs frequently undertake additional emotional and cognitive labor, such as individualized planning, differentiated instruction, and social-emotional support, without corresponding financial recognition. This condition mirrors findings from Mukti et al. (2024) and Handayani (2025), who observed that the absence of targeted compensation mechanisms in inclusive schools often undermines teacher motivation and contributes to professional fatigue.

Despite these challenges, the study found that intrinsic motivation—rooted in empathy, moral commitment, and a sense of spiritual calling—remains a dominant driver of teacher dedication. Many teachers articulated that they perceive their work not as an administrative duty but as a moral vocation. One teacher expressed, “We do this not for money, but because every child deserves a chance.” This sentiment echoes the findings of Pamungkas (2025) and Akmaluddin (2025), who emphasize that in inclusive education, moral and affective dimensions of motivation frequently compensate for limited financial rewards. Teachers’ deep emotional engagement is also supported by the work of Llorent and Fernández-Cruz (2024), who identify compassion and empathy as core professional competencies that sustain inclusive teaching even in the face of structural constraints.

However, relying solely on intrinsic motivation presents sustainability challenges. Over time, emotional labor without tangible recognition can lead to teacher burnout and declining morale, as reported in studies by Clores (2025) and Mahade and Nair (2025). These findings highlight that inclusive HRM should integrate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational dimensions to ensure teacher well-being and professional continuity. Compensation in inclusive education, therefore, must be redefined beyond monetary value to encompass non-financial incentives such as professional recognition, institutional appreciation, and opportunities for advancement. Richtmann (2025) and Prieto (2023) argue that such holistic compensation systems which include awards, peer acknowledgment, and access to professional development can enhance teachers’ sense of belonging and purpose.

The leadership of the Laboratory School has begun to recognize this need by implementing small-scale non-financial recognition initiatives such as the “Inclusive Teacher of the Month” program. This initiative, though modest, reflects an emerging awareness of the importance of holistic motivation mechanisms that value teachers’ affective labor and emotional resilience. It also aligns with the inclusive HRM model proposed by [Permatasari and Tandiayuk \(2023\)](#), which emphasizes that recognition, autonomy, and meaningful engagement are crucial determinants of teacher performance in inclusive environments.

In conclusion, the study underscores that sustainable inclusive education requires a balanced motivation framework—one that honors teachers’ intrinsic values while institutionalizing equitable compensation and recognition systems. Such a framework would not only strengthen teacher retention but also foster a culture of dignity, empathy, and professional fulfillment within inclusive schools ([Ghufron, 2024](#); [Fatima, Rafiq-uz-Zaman, Arshad, & Rasheed, 2025](#)).

Integrative Interpretation

The integration of planning, development, evaluation, and compensation processes contributes to the improvement of inclusive HR quality at the Laboratory Elementary School. Teachers exhibit higher tolerance, adaptability, and empathy in managing inclusive students. Additionally, the collaborative relationship between the school, university, and provincial autism service center forms a sustainable model of inclusive education governance.

Table 1. Summary of the Inclusive HRM System

Component	Core Process	Supporting Mechanism	Output
HR Planning	Needs analysis (based on PPDB and assessment)	Recruitment, selection, teacher placement	Availability of competent inclusive teachers
HR Development	Workshops, collaboration with university	bimtek, training on adaptive pedagogy with	Increased teacher capacity
HR Evaluation	Observation, reflective feedback, supervision	Parent involvement, student outcomes	Identified strengths & improvement areas
HR Compensation	Collaboration with parents, appreciation system	Incentives & recognition	Improved teacher motivation & retention

Overall, the findings suggest that HRM in inclusive education at the Laboratory Elementary School operates within a transitional paradigm from conventional administrative management toward adaptive, inclusive, and participatory management. The HRM process is characterized by strong individual commitment but weak institutionalization.

This aligns with the theoretical perspective of [Thomas \(1997\)](#), who asserts that the sustainability of inclusion depends not only on policy frameworks but on the transformation of professional culture. The study also reinforces the argument of [Akmaluddin \(2025\)](#) and [Riyadi et al. \(2023\)](#) that inclusive HRM requires systemic alignment across recruitment, training, evaluation, and motivation.

Conceptually, the findings contribute to the development of an Inclusive HRM Model for elementary education, consisting of four interdependent pillars: (1) Strategic HR Planning based on student diversity data, (2) Continuous Professional Development through collaborative learning ecosystems, (3) Contextualized Evaluation Systems emphasizing adaptive pedagogy, (4) Holistic Motivation and Reward Frameworks combining financial and non-financial incentives.

This model reflects a shift from policy compliance to cultural integration where inclusivity is embedded not only in curriculum design but also in the daily practices, ethics, and emotional climate of the school.

Conclusions

This study concludes that human resource management (HRM) in inclusive elementary education at the Laboratory Elementary School of Gorontalo State University operates through four interrelated

dimensions planning, development, evaluation, and compensation forming a comprehensive yet partially adaptive model. Inclusive HR planning uses data-driven needs analysis and flexible teacher deployment, while professional development emphasizes collaborative and reflective learning, though it remains irregular and not fully embedded institutionally. Performance evaluation is formative and dialogic but lacks standardized inclusion-specific criteria and recognition of teachers' socio-emotional labor, and compensation relies largely on intrinsic motivation with limited non-financial recognition. These gaps indicate the need for systemic alignment and structural reforms, including strategic forecasting in HR planning, continuous and embedded professional development, holistic evaluation frameworks, and integrated compensation systems to ensure teacher well-being, retention, and sustainable inclusive education outcomes.

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