

Academic Supervision Strategies based on Authentic Leadership in Supporting the Implementation of Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT: *Inclusive education requires academic supervision that extends beyond technical procedures by embedding humanistic values and a strong commitment to student diversity. This study aims to explore strategies of academic supervision grounded in authentic leadership to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 34 Baba, Enrekang Regency. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving the school principal, ten teachers, and students with special needs. The results show that authentic leadership dimensions self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing were integrated into supervision practices that fostered trust, openness, and collaboration. Supervisory strategies emphasized reflective mentoring, collaborative training, and formative evaluation, enabling teachers to design adaptive instruction and establish inclusive, student-centered classrooms. These practices enhanced teacher professionalism and supported equitable learning opportunities for students with diverse needs. Despite these gains, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and time constraints in supervision were identified. The study concludes that authentic leadership based academic supervision not only strengthens inclusive practices but also serves as a transformational tool for cultivating an inclusive school culture.*

Keywords: *Authentic Leadership, Academic Supervision, Inclusive Education.*

ABSTRAK: Pendidikan inklusif memerlukan supervisi akademik yang tidak hanya berfokus pada prosedur teknis, tetapi juga mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai humanistik serta komitmen yang kuat terhadap keberagaman peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi supervisi akademik yang berlandaskan kepemimpinan autentik dalam mendukung penguatan implementasi pendidikan inklusif di SDN 34 Baba, Kabupaten Enrekang. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, sepuluh guru, serta peserta didik berkebutuhan khusus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dimensi kepemimpinan autentik kesadaran diri, transparansi relasional, perspektif moral yang terinternalisasi, dan pemrosesan yang seimbang terintegrasi dalam praktik supervisi yang mendorong terciptanya kepercayaan, keterbukaan, dan kolaborasi. Strategi supervisi menekankan pendampingan reflektif, pelatihan kolaboratif, dan evaluasi formatif, sehingga memungkinkan guru merancang pembelajaran adaptif serta membangun kelas yang inklusif dan berpusat pada peserta didik. Praktik-praktik tersebut meningkatkan profesionalisme guru dan mendukung terciptanya kesempatan belajar yang setara bagi peserta didik dengan beragam kebutuhan. Meskipun demikian, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi sejumlah tantangan, seperti keterbatasan sumber daya, kurangnya kesiapan guru, serta keterbatasan waktu dalam

pelaksanaan supervisi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa supervisi akademik berbasis kepemimpinan autentik tidak hanya memperkuat praktik inklusif, tetapi juga berperan sebagai sarana transformasional dalam membangun budaya sekolah yang inklusif.

Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan Autentik, Supervisi Akademik, Pendidikan Inklusif.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a global priority in the effort to provide equal access to quality education for all children, regardless of their background, abilities, or special needs. The principle of inclusive education emphasizes that every learner has the right to participate fully in the learning process, without discrimination or exclusion. However, the realization of inclusive education at the primary school level is not without challenges. Teachers often face difficulties in adapting curriculum and instructional strategies, while schools struggle with limited resources and professional capacity. In this context, leadership and academic supervision play a crucial role in ensuring that inclusive values are translated into effective classroom practices.

The research problem that underpins this study is the lack of supervision strategies that integrate humanistic values and authentic leadership in guiding teachers to implement inclusive education. At SDN 34 Baba, Enrekang Regency, the implementation of inclusive education has encountered obstacles, particularly in preparing teachers to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. While supervision has been conducted, it often remains procedural and technical, without fully addressing the values of collaboration, transparency, and moral responsibility. This gap highlights the urgent need for innovative supervision strategies that can empower teachers not only professionally but also personally, in embracing inclusive principles.

Insights from previous studies show that authentic leadership offers a promising approach to address these challenges. Authentic leadership, as proposed by Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Walumbwa et al. (2008), is characterized by self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective. Leaders who embody these qualities can foster trust, motivate teachers, and build an organizational climate that values openness and inclusion. When integrated into academic supervision, authentic leadership has the potential to transform supervision from a top-down evaluative process into a collaborative and developmental practice. Such supervision not only improves teaching quality but also aligns teachers' attitudes with the broader vision of inclusive education.

The objective of this research is to develop and analyze academic supervision strategies based on authentic leadership in supporting inclusive education at the primary school level. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) describe how authentic leadership is applied in the supervision practices of the school principal, (2) examine the ways in which supervision strategies contribute to teacher growth in inclusive practices, and (3) identify challenges and opportunities in implementing authentic leadership-based supervision for inclusive education. By achieving these objectives, the study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically to the discourse on educational leadership and supervision in the context of inclusive schooling.

A summary of relevant theoretical perspectives underpins this study. The grand theory guiding the research is Authentic Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the leader's self awareness and ethical foundation as central to effective leadership. The middle range theory is Academic Supervision Theory (Goldhammer, 1969; Glickman, 1981; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007), which focuses on systematic guidance to improve teaching performance. Finally, the applied framework is the Inclusive Education Principles (UNESCO, 2009; Ainscow, 2005), which advocate for equitable access, participation, and achievement for all learners. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how leadership, supervision, and inclusive practices intersect to create a supportive educational environment.

In summary, the introduction highlights the urgency of rethinking academic supervision in primary schools to go beyond technical compliance and incorporate values of authenticity, collaboration, and inclusivity. The research is positioned at the intersection of leadership studies and inclusive education, addressing a practical problem faced by schools while also extending theoretical discussions. The following sections will elaborate on the literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions, providing a holistic analysis of how authentic leadership based academic supervision can be a transformational tool for strengthening inclusive education at SDN 34 Baba, Enrekang Regency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design aimed at exploring and describing the implementation of academic supervision strategies based on authentic leadership in supporting inclusive education at the primary school level. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena within a real life context. Specifically, it provided an opportunity to examine how authentic leadership is operationalized through supervision practices in a school that strives to implement inclusive education.

The research was conducted at SDN 34 Baba, Enrekang Regency, a public primary school that has committed to inclusive education but continues to face challenges related to teacher preparedness, limited resources, and the diversity of student needs. The participants included the school principal as the primary actor of supervision, ten classroom teachers as direct recipients of supervision, and several students with special educational needs whose learning experiences provided additional perspectives. In total, the research involved approximately sixteen individuals who were selected purposively based on their relevance to the implementation of inclusive education and academic supervision practices.

Data collection techniques combined multiple sources to ensure the credibility and richness of the findings. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers to gain insights into their perceptions, experiences, and practices of academic supervision grounded in authentic leadership. Second, participatory observation was employed to capture real time interactions between the principal, teachers, and students during supervision and classroom activities. Third, document analysis was carried out by reviewing supervision reports, lesson plans, and school policies related to inclusive

education. Triangulation across these data collection methods strengthened the validity of the study and provided a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

The data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of three main activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the stage of data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded and categorized according to themes related to authentic leadership and academic supervision. Data display involved organizing the information in matrices, tables, and diagrams to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative comparison between the data and the theoretical framework, followed by verification to ensure consistency and trustworthiness.

To enhance the rigor of the study, several strategies were applied, including member checking, where participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of the findings, and peer debriefing, where research colleagues provided critical feedback on the interpretations. Ethical considerations were also upheld by obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting the rights of all respondents, particularly students with special educational needs.

This research method combined a qualitative case study design, purposive participant selection, multiple data collection techniques, and systematic data analysis to explore how authentic leadership based academic supervision can strengthen the implementation of inclusive education at the primary school level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Authentic Leadership Practices in Academic Supervision is the findings indicate that the principal consistently demonstrated authentic leadership qualities in his supervisory role. Self-awareness and moral perspective were visible in the way he acknowledged both the strengths and weaknesses of teachers, providing encouragement and constructive feedback. Relational transparency fostered trust and open communication, which allowed teachers to share challenges without fear of judgment. Teachers expressed that the principal's openness motivated them to embrace innovation and adapt their teaching to accommodate diverse learners.

This result aligns with Avolio and Gardner (2005), who argue that authentic leadership enhances trust and commitment. It also resonates with Walumbwa et al. (2008), emphasizing that leaders who model transparency and ethical decision making can inspire followers to internalize organizational goals.

Academic Supervision Strategies for Teacher Development is a supervision was carried out through collaborative dialogue rather than top-down evaluation. The principal emphasized reflective mentoring, where teachers were guided to analyze their own practices; collaborative training, where peer learning was encouraged and formative evaluation, which focused on continuous improvement. Teachers acknowledged that this approach not only improved their professional competence but also nurtured personal

growth, such as patience, empathy, and responsibility toward students with special needs.

These strategies reflect Glickman's (1981) conception of supervision as a developmental process rather than mere control. By integrating authentic leadership, supervision becomes transformative, fostering teacher autonomy and innovation while maintaining accountability.

Impact on Inclusive Education Practices As a result of authentic leadership-based supervision, teachers increasingly adopted adaptive instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction, individualized support, and peer assisted learning. Classroom environments became more inclusive, student centered, and responsive to diversity. Parents and students observed improved participation, reduced stigma, and stronger social integration of children with special educational needs.

These findings support Ainscow's (2005) argument that inclusive education requires schools to reorganize teaching and learning processes to reduce barriers. The evidence also confirms UNESCO's (2009) emphasis on equity and participation as central to inclusive education. Authentic leadership provided the cultural foundation, while supervision offered the practical mechanism to achieve inclusivity.

Despite the progress, several challenges emerged. Teachers reported limited resources, particularly teaching aids and learning materials adapted for special needs students. In addition, some teachers lacked sufficient training to handle diverse learning difficulties, and supervision sessions were constrained by time limitations, reducing opportunities for in depth feedback. These challenges echo findings from previous studies (Sharma & Loreman, 2014) that resource limitations and teacher readiness are persistent barriers to inclusive education. They highlight the need for systemic support, including policy, budget, and continuous professional development, to sustain the impact of authentic leadership-based supervision.

Overall, the study demonstrates that authentic leadership-based supervision is not only effective in improving teacher competence but also in shaping school culture toward inclusivity. The integration of leadership values into supervision practices transforms academic supervision into a transformational tool, bridging the gap between policy and classroom practice.

This integrative role confirms Sergiovanni & Starratt's (2007) view that supervision should serve both technical and moral purposes in education. The study contributes to theory by linking grand theory (authentic leadership) with middle range theory (academic supervision) in the applied context of inclusive education. Practically, it provides a model for school principals to combine ethical leadership and collaborative supervision to create sustainable inclusive education practices

Discussion

The central research question of this study was how academic supervision strategies based on authentic leadership support the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. The findings demonstrate that authentic leadership significantly strengthens academic supervision and transforms it into a developmental and collaborative

process. Through practices such as reflective mentoring, collaborative training, and formative evaluation, supervision empowered teachers to implement adaptive and inclusive teaching strategies

The results were obtained through triangulated data collection, including interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Teachers consistently reported that the principal's authentic leadership qualities self-awareness, relational transparency, moral perspective, and balanced processing encouraged trust and openness. Observations of classroom practices confirmed that supervision under authentic leadership led to differentiated instruction, peer assisted learning, and inclusive classroom environments. Document analysis further supported these findings, as supervision reports and lesson plan reflected alignment with inclusive education principles.

Interpreting these findings, it is evident that academic supervision under authentic leadership goes beyond technical compliance. It addresses both personal and professional dimensions of teacher development, fostering intrinsic motivation to embrace inclusivity. The integration of leadership values into supervisory practice transforms supervision into a cultural and moral force, not merely an administrative function. This interpretation underscores the importance of leadership identity and ethical values in achieving sustainable educational change. These results resonate with and extend existing theories. Avolio and Gardner's (2005) Authentic Leadership Theory and Walumbwa et al. (2008) emphasize the role of self-awareness and transparency in leadership effectiveness. The study confirms these dimensions in the educational setting and demonstrates their relevance for supervision practices. Likewise, Glickman's (1981) and Sergiovanni & Starratt's (2007) perspectives on supervision as developmental are validated, but this study extends them by showing that authentic leadership provides the moral and cultural foundation for effective supervision. The findings also reinforce Ainscow's (2005) and UNESCO's (2009) principles of inclusive education, showing how leadership and supervision can operationalize inclusivity at the classroom level.

These findings are consistent with Ampry's (2024) AL-ESA model, which highlights that authentic leadership positively influences teacher performance, with academic supervision acting as a key mediator in the primary school context. This study is also in line with Rozak, Sumarto, Komariah, and Ampry (2021), who emphasized that principal leadership plays a significant role in improving student achievement, thereby reinforcing the importance of leadership practices in shaping educational outcomes.

Theoretically, this study proposes that authentic leadership is not only a complementary dimension but a necessary foundation for academic supervision in inclusive education. Supervision strategies grounded in authenticity are more likely to succeed in building inclusive school cultures because they combine technical guidance with moral and relational dimensions. This extends existing supervision theory by highlighting authenticity as a central principle

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that the research problem lack of supervision strategies grounded in authentic leadership can be addressed through an integrated framework of leadership, supervision, and inclusivity. Authentic leadership based

academic supervision answers the need for a transformational tool that bridges policy and practice, enhances teacher professionalism, and cultivates inclusive school culture

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how academic supervision strategies based on authentic leadership can support the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 34 Baba, Enrekang Regency. The findings and discussion reveal several important conclusions that directly address the research objectives.

First, the study confirms that authentic leadership is a crucial foundation for effective academic supervision. The principal's demonstration of self-awareness, relational transparency, moral perspective, and balanced processing created a culture of trust and collaboration. This leadership style encouraged teachers to be more open, reflective, and motivated to engage with inclusive practices.

Second, the integration of authentic leadership into supervision transformed the process from a top-down evaluative mechanism into a developmental and collaborative one. Supervisory strategies such as reflective mentoring, collaborative training, and formative evaluation empowered teachers to enhance both professional competence and personal growth. Teachers not only improved their instructional methods but also cultivated attitudes of empathy, patience, and responsibility, which are essential for inclusive education.

Third, the impact on inclusive practices was evident in classrooms that became more adaptive, and student centered. Teachers applied differentiated instruction, peer assisted learning, and individualized support to meet the diverse needs of students. These practices improved student participation, reduced barriers to learning, and fostered social integration for students with special educational needs. The result was a more equitable and inclusive learning environment that aligned with national and international principles of inclusive education.

Fourth, the study identified challenges that remain unresolved, including limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and time constraints in supervision. These challenges highlight the need for systemic and sustained support at the institutional and policy levels to ensure the long-term success of inclusive education initiatives.

From these conclusions, several key points emerge. Authentic leadership is not merely complementary but essential to academic supervision in inclusive contexts. Academic supervision that integrates authenticity serves as a transformational tool, bridging the gap between inclusive education policies and classroom practices. This research extends existing supervision theory by demonstrating that authenticity adds a moral and cultural dimension that is critical for sustaining inclusive school culture.

In essence, the study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it strengthens the link between leadership studies, supervision theory, and inclusive education. Practically, it offers a model for school principals to apply authentic leadership in supervision as a way to enhance teacher professionalism and inclusive practice. The research thus provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and

researchers seeking to advance inclusive education through leadership and supervision

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