Review

Transforming School Culture Toward an Inclusive Environment: Change Management Through the Jarik Ma' Siti Program

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Abstract

Purpose: Describe the central aim of the study. Explain the issue, gap, or problem being addressed and clarify the overall intention of the research. This study aims to analyze the change management process in transforming school culture toward an inclusive environment through the Jarik Ma' Siti Program at SMP Negeri 10 Malang. The research is grounded in the increasing number of students with special needs in regular schools without Special Education Teachers (GPK), teachers' limited understanding of inclusive practices, and the lack of studies examining cultural change as an impact of implementing such an innovative program.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Explain the research strategy and methods used. Outline how the study was conducted, including data collection procedures, analytical techniques, and research framework. This study aims to analyze the change management process in transforming school culture toward an inclusive environment through the Jarik Ma' Siti Program at SMP Negeri 10 Malang. The research is grounded in the increasing number of students with special needs in regular schools without Special Education Teachers (GPK), teachers' limited understanding of inclusive practices, and the lack of studies examining cultural change as an impact of implementing such an innovative program.

Results/Findings: The analysis indicates cultural transformation at three levels: (1) the development of a stronger collaborative culture among teachers; (2) the strengthening of inclusive classroom culture reflected in students' social behavior and teachers' adaptive pedagogical practices; and (3) institutional cultural change marked by policy integration that positions inclusion as a core school value.

Originality/Value: This study contributes new insights by demonstrating how teacher-led initiatives can drive systemic cultural transformation even in the absence of GPK support. The findings provide a practical reference for other regular schools in managing cultural change toward more inclusive educational environments.

Keywords: school culture; change management; inclusive education; Jarik Ma' Siti; cultural transformation.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is an educational approach that places all learners, including students with special needs, in the same learning environment without discrimination,

with the goal of ensuring equitable access, participation, and learning outcomes for all (Kefallinou et al., 2020; Meliani, 2025; Ydo, 2020). The implementation of inclusive education requires supportive policies, learner-centered curricula, flexible instructional strategies, and a conducive physical and social environment (Filippou et al., 2025; Miller et al., 2020; Shutaleva et al., 2023). For this reason, school culture plays a central role as the foundational element in creating a safe, supportive, and accepting learning atmosphere. The success of inclusive education is largely determined by the condition of the school's culture, rather than merely its technical or administrative readiness. An inclusive school culture encompasses values, norms, and practices that emphasize acceptance, collaboration, and respect for diversity. Schools with strong inclusive cultures tend to demonstrate visionary leadership, a shared sense of community, and value-laden language that promotes inclusion (Rupiah et al., 2025; Yuliana & Riswanto, 2025; Zollers et al., 1999)

Based on the Indonesian Ministerial Regulation on National Education Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional (Permendiknas) No. 70 Tahun 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and Those with Extraordinary Intelligence and/or Talent, Article 2 Paragraph (1) mandates that local governments designate schools that must accept students with disabilities and those with special talents to learn alongside their peers. Although inclusive education has been a national priority, many regular schools still experience gaps between policy and implementation. Common challenges include limited teacher understanding of diverse learning needs, the absence of Special Education Teachers (GPK), and inadequate collaborative cultures among teachers, parents, and the broader school community (Almulla et al., 2025; Arteaga-Alcívar et al., 2025; Guillén-Martínez et al., 2025; Messiou, 2017). These challenges become more complex when schools face a sudden increase in the number of students with special needs without sufficient structural preparation. SMP Negeri 10 Malang experienced such a situation, with the proportion of students with special needs increasing from 7.3% in 2018 to 57.1% in 2023 (Jarik Ma' Siti., 2023). This significant shift required the school to confront difficult realities, especially because it is still classified as a regular school without a formal inclusive education system.

If school culture change is not properly managed, various negative consequences may arise and affect the entire school community. Teachers may experience psychological pressure, confusion in instructional practices, and resistance to inclusive approaches. Students with special needs may face social rejection or academic difficulties, while social tensions may increase when tolerance and empathy are not systematically cultivated from the outset (Brady et al., 2024; Parashchenko, 2025; Poon-Mcbrayer, 2017). Therefore, managing school culture change becomes a critical and urgent issue, especially for schools like SMP Negeri 10 Malang that have undergone a rapid shift in student composition. Previous research has examined the implementation of inclusive education, but most studies focus on instructional strategies, the role of Special Education Teachers, or formal policy aspects. Few studies specifically explore how regular schools manage cultural change when the number of students with special needs increases dramatically. Additionally, limited research discusses how new values—such as empathy, collaboration, and social acceptance—emerge as outcomes of internal organizational change. There is also a lack of studies examining the experiences of schools implementing inclusion without structural support such as GPK, where cultural transformation is driven primarily by teacher-led initiatives. This gap highlights the significance and urgency of investigating school culture change in the context of SMPN 10 Malang.

Given the dynamics of inclusive education in regular schools, especially those experiencing a significant increase in the number of students with special needs, there is a

growing need for in-depth studies on how schools manage changes in values, practices, and social interaction patterns. SMP Negeri 10 Malang faces a complex situation in which the rapid rise in the number of students with special needs occurs while the school has yet to develop adequate structural capacity as a formal inclusive school. This condition requires a comprehensive restructuring of school culture to create a learning environment that is accepting, adaptive, and supportive of student diversity. In this context, it is essential to understand how the change management process is carried out by the school in response to new challenges, including how local initiatives such as the Jarik Ma' Siti Program contribute to driving cultural transformation. Therefore, this study focuses on Change Management in the Transformation of School Culture Toward an Inclusive Environment: A Case Study of the Jarik Ma' Siti Program at SMP Negeri 10 Malang, as an effort to explain the dynamics of cultural change occurring in a regular school responding to increasing learner diversity.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design focused on SMP Negeri 10 Malang as the unit of analysis. This design was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of managing school culture change in the implementation of the Jarik Ma' Siti Program. The case study approach allows the researcher to capture the processes, context, and natural interactions among actors. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 10 Malang, a regular school that has experienced a significant increase in the number of students with special needs over the past five years. Data were collected using three primary techniques: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) observations, and (3) document analysis. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model, which includes: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used only as an assistant for improving sentence structure, clarity, and grammar. AI was not used to generate data, conduct analysis, interpret findings, or develop the scientific content of this paper. All ideas, arguments, and interpretations are fully the authors' own.

3. Results

3.1. Changes in Teachers' Collaborative Culture

The findings indicate that changes in teachers' collaborative culture at SMP Negeri 10 Malang represent one of the most prominent forms of transformation that emerged following the increasing demands of inclusive education. In the initial condition, collaborative practices among teachers were still minimal, informal, and unstructured. Communication among teachers tended to be limited to administrative matters, while discussions regarding students' individual needs were almost never carried out in depth. Differences in teaching approaches across subjects often led to inconsistencies, causing teachers to work separately without a shared situational understanding of students' conditions.

Cultural transformation began to take shape when the number of students with special needs increased and teachers realized that they could no longer work individually as they had before. Teachers then developed new patterns of communication that were more intensive and frequent. An informant explained that teachers now "coordinate more often and discuss the children's development," [W-KP-04/11/2025] especially when they encounter unusual behavior or academic performance. This coordination is no longer incidental but has become a routine practice embedded in their daily work: asking questions, sharing updates, and ensuring that approaches across teachers remain consistent and mutually supportive.

The Learning Community (KOMBEL), held every Friday, plays a major role in building this collaborative culture. This forum serves as a dedicated space for teachers to discuss instructional strategies, analyze students' development, and find collective solutions to challenges faced in the classroom. An informant stated that through this forum, teachers can engage in "more intensive cross-teacher coordination each week through KOMBEL, discussing anything—whether about the children, the learning process, or the outcomes." [W-WK-11/11/2025] Thus, KOMBEL functions not only as a space for reflection but also as a new cultural system that strengthens teachers' professional identity as a learning community.

This collaborative cultural change touches not only technical aspects but also shifts in teachers' values and professional attitudes. Teachers began internalizing the principle of "working with heart and with care," as explicitly emphasized by an informant: "after the implementation of Jarik Ma' Siti, teachers have become more patient because we work with heart, and with care so as not to make mistakes." [W-KP-04/11/2025] This statement shows a fundamental shift from old routines toward new work patterns that emphasize empathy, attentiveness, and sincerity in serving diverse learners.

The principle of "working with heart and with care" functions not only as a moral value but also as a practical guideline shaping teachers' collaborative patterns. Teachers now feel the need to listen to colleagues, confirm findings, understand students' conditions from multiple perspectives, and formulate decisions collectively. In other words, empathy and attentiveness have become the foundation of increasingly strong professional coordination. This is reflected in teachers' heightened sensitivity to changes in student behavior, their quicker responses to learning challenges, and more structured follow-up actions across teachers.

Beyond the strengthening of empathetic values, instructional synchronization has also improved significantly. An informant conveyed that teachers are now more coordinated because they observe and cross-check one another's findings, ensuring that instructional strategies across subjects no longer operate in isolation. This change marks the emergence of a new professional culture that prioritizes alignment, open communication, and a shared sense of responsibility toward each student's development.

Overall, the collaborative culture of teachers at SMP Negeri 10 Malang has shifted from individual and reactive work patterns to collaborative patterns that are proactive, structured, empathetic, and grounded in the principle of working with heart and care. This transformation demonstrates that change management in schools occurs not only at the technical level but also in the dimensions of values, attitudes, and professional habits that serve as the foundation for building an inclusive and sustainable school culture.

3.2. Inclusive Classroom Culture Change

The findings show that inclusive classroom culture change is one of the most visible impacts of the implementation of the Jarik Ma' Siti Program at SMP Negeri 10 Malang. This change is reflected in two main domains: (1) students' social behavior in responding to diversity, and (2) teachers' pedagogical practices in creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment. Both domains reinforce each other and serve as drivers of cultural transformation within classroom life.

3.2.1. Changes in Students' Social Behavior

Inclusive cultural change at SMP Negeri 10 Malang is clearly reflected in students' social behavior when interacting with peers with special needs. Informants explained that regular students now demonstrate increased tolerance, acceptance, and support toward peers in the inclusion category. This is shown by how students become more tolerant toward their peers and more supportive even when some students display playful behavior,

indicating that the habituation process guided by teachers has produced a strong shift in attitudes. Previously, students with special needs tended to be a group vulnerable to social distance; now, their presence is accepted as part of classroom dynamics. The classroom's social environment also shows increased solidarity, particularly when regular students assist students with special needs in answering teachers' questions or understanding learning instructions. Informants emphasized that some inclusion students have experienced significant psychosocial development, such as becoming more confident and courageous because they feel noticed by teachers and their peers. This development illustrates that changes in students' social behavior occur not only at a surface level but also at deeper levels related to courage, comfort, and a sense of belonging.

In addition, the school strategically builds inclusive social relationships through the peer tutoring mechanism. Homeroom teachers select students who are considered appropriate to accompany students with special needs, both in academic activities and daily classroom routines. Informants explained that peer tutoring "is not only for inclusion students, but also for students who are lazy to learn or slow to learn" [W-KP-04/11/2025], indicating that this system expands the culture of mutual support—not only for students with disabilities but for all students in need. This strengthens the collective culture emphasizing that every student deserves help when facing difficulties.

The annual beginning-of-year socialization program also contributes significantly to changes in students' social behavior. Informants shared that at the start of each academic year, OSIS, school cadres, and all new students receive an explanation of what the Jarik Ma' Siti Program is and how they should behave toward diverse peers. This practice conditions the classroom from the outset to understand diversity as part of the school's identity. The socialization process becomes a yearly ritual that systematically shapes collective awareness, helping students grow with the understanding that inclusion is a social norm to be upheld together.

Overall, the changes in students' social behavior represent a cultural shift from a fragmented classroom environment to a more supportive and empathetic learning community. Regular students no longer view differences as barriers but as part of the learning dynamic. This change forms an important foundation for building a strong and sustainable inclusive culture in the school.

3.2.2. Changes in Teachers' Pedagogical Practices

Inclusive culture change in the classroom is also shaped through teachers' pedagogical practices, which have become increasingly adaptive and responsive to student diversity. Based on interviews, teachers—especially homeroom teachers—actively manage the classroom environment to create a safe and conducive learning climate. Informants explained that class officers play a strategic role in monitoring classroom dynamics so that teachers can quickly respond when obstacles or situations arise that may disrupt the comfort of students with special needs. This mechanism makes classroom management no longer merely an administrative activity but part of ensuring the daily continuity of inclusive culture.

Furthermore, pedagogical strategies are strengthened through the practice of early-year socialization of the inclusive program. Informants mentioned that teachers provide

understanding to OSIS, school cadres, and all new students so that they "understand what Jarik is," ensuring that acceptance of diversity is formed from the beginning. This socialization acts as cultural onboarding that prepares students to interact within an inclusive learning environment.

Teachers also make adjustments to learning activities through seating arrangements, classroom conditioning, and task modifications that allow exceptional students to participate according to their capacities. According to the inclusion curriculum coordinator, "From the inclusion curriculum perspective, adjustments are made flexibly according to each student's needs" [W-KI-11/11/2025].

Another practice reinforcing inclusive culture is the implementation of the peer tutoring system. Homeroom teachers select students who are considered capable of supporting students with special needs—not only academically but also socially. Informants emphasized that peer tutoring "is not only for inclusion students, but also for students who are lazy to learn or slow to learn" [W-KP-04/11/2025], thereby expanding the culture of mutual assistance in the classroom. Through this support mechanism, teachers do not work alone but create an internal support structure among students.

Overall, the pedagogical practices implemented by teachers demonstrate a cultural shift from classroom management oriented toward control to one oriented toward readiness, care, and maintaining a positive social climate. Teachers not only teach but also coordinate various classroom elements—from class officers to peer tutors—conduct socialization, and organize the physical environment to ensure that every student feels accepted. These evolving practices reinforce the transformation toward a classroom that is more inclusive, adaptive, and humane.

3.3. Institutional Cultural Change / Policy

The findings show that institutional cultural change represents the highest stage of transformation occurring at SMP Negeri 10 Malang following the implementation of the Jarik Ma' Siti Program. This transformation is reflected in how the school formalizes inclusive values through policy integration, school governance processes, and the institutionalization of inclusive practices within the school's identity. Unlike changes at the teacher or classroom level, institutional cultural change involves shifts in school structures, norms, and collective commitments that ensure inclusivity becomes a long-term value rather than a temporary initiative.

Informants explained that the school has gradually integrated inclusive values into its formal policies, including the school's vision and mission, annual work programs, and internal regulations. This integration ensures that inclusive education is not perceived as an additional task but as an essential component of the school's direction and identity. One informant stated that the school "does not differentiate children; all activities may be followed by all children, including special needs children," demonstrating that institutional policy explicitly supports non-discriminatory practices. The school ensures that extracurricular activities, competitions, and other school programs remain accessible to all students without restrictions based on ability differences.

Institutional commitment to inclusion is also demonstrated through structured evaluation mechanisms. Informants noted that the school conducts semiannual evaluations with teachers to assess the implementation of inclusive programs and identify areas requiring improvement. This evaluation is not merely administrative but functions as a

strategic process to maintain alignment between the program's goals and daily practices in classrooms. The evaluation forums serve to reinforce inclusive values and ensure that all teachers maintain consistent standards in managing diverse learners.

Furthermore, the school encourages the participation of all students, including those with special needs, in various academic and non-academic activities. Informants shared that some students with special needs have not only participated but also achieved recognition in competitions, indicating that institutional support enables these students to grow beyond expectations. This institutional acknowledgment strengthens the message that every student has the right to flourish regardless of their limitations.

The school also promotes inclusive culture through visual and symbolic reinforcement across the school environment. Informants explained that posters, school announcements, and multimedia presentations are used to introduce and normalize inclusive values. This symbolic integration helps shape collective awareness among students, teachers, and parents that inclusion is part of the school's identity. It also serves as a consistent reminder for all school stakeholders to uphold respectful, empathetic, and supportive attitudes.

Overall, institutional cultural change at SMP Negeri 10 Malang demonstrates that the transformation driven by the Jarik Ma' Siti Program extends beyond teacher practices and classroom interactions. It has become embedded in the school's formal policies, routines, and collective consciousness. This institutionalization ensures that inclusion is sustained over time, even as student demographics or teaching staff change. The school's experience shows that cultural transformation becomes stronger and more enduring when supported by consistent policies, structured evaluation, and symbolic reinforcement that aligns with inclusive values.

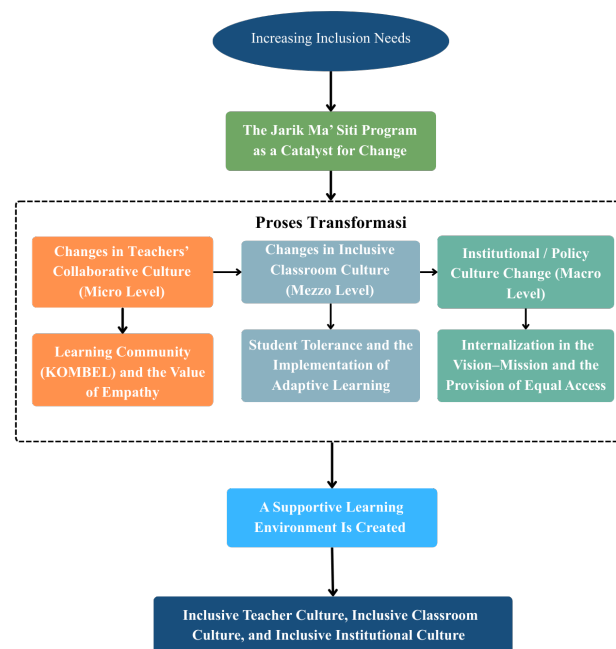The findings of this study are presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Research Findings Diagram.

4. Discussion

This discussion uses Kurt Lewin's change management model as the analytical framework to understand how cultural transformation at SMP Negeri 10 Malang

unfolded through the phases of unfreezing, change, and refreezing. This process is not merely technical but also touches on social values, teacher norms, and institutional identity. In the initial phase, the school faced a "status quo" condition in which teachers' work culture was individualistic and fragmented. Awareness of the need for change emerged when the number of students with special needs increased drastically. According to Lewin, unfreezing occurs when an organization begins to question old habits and opens itself to transformation (Harahap et al., 2024). In the context of SMP Negeri 10 Malang, teachers acted as agents of change, serving as catalysts and managing the transformation taking place (Supriyanto, 2016). This collective awareness triggered more intensive communication among teachers and the initiation of the Learning Community (KOMBEL) (Sa'idu, 2024). Open communication and active teacher participation are crucial strategies in releasing the "old status quo" (Harahap et al., 2024).

During this phase, professional, social, and institutional cultural transformation truly occurred. A collaborative teacher culture developed through regular KOMBEL meetings, where teachers discussed students' development, learning difficulties, and shared strategies. The principle of "working with heart and with care" became increasingly internalized. Lewin's change model emphasizes the importance of active participation in formulating new strategies (Harahap et al., 2024). At the classroom level, students demonstrated higher tolerance and solidarity through the roles of peer tutors and monitoring by class officers. This aligns with value transformation in the change phase, where new norms are taught and practiced through daily interactions (Syafitri, 2024). To ensure more permanent change, the school began integrating inclusive values into its vision–mission and internal policy discussions. Semiannual evaluations indicate that the changes are not episodic but have become part of the organizational culture. According to Lewin, refreezing means solidifying the new ways of working as the "new status quo" (Harahap et al., 2024). By not differentiating students in extracurricular activities and providing opportunities for all students to achieve, the school strengthens its inclusive identity as part of its institutional structure.

These findings align with the study by Harahap et al (2024), which demonstrates that Lewin's model is effective as a change framework in educational organizations. In their study, strategies such as open communication, team involvement, and regular feedback were seen as key to successful unfreezing and refreezing phases. Additionally, research by Hanum et al., 2025 shows that school principals can facilitate unfreezing by creating new initiatives that break old habits and mobilize the entire school community toward a shared vision. The application of Lewin's change model at SMP Negeri 10 Malang can serve as a practical reference for other schools facing similar challenges, especially in the context of inclusion. Other schools may begin the unfreeze phase by building collective awareness of student diversity and the need for value change. Through regular meetings (such as KOMBEL), teacher involvement, and peer tutor practices, they can move into the change phase. For stabilization, it is essential to incorporate inclusive values into formal policies (vision–mission, institutional structures) while implementing regular evaluation systems to prevent the new culture from reverting to old patterns.

Although Lewin's model is highly useful, its implementation is not always smooth. Resistance from individuals or groups may still emerge, especially if the change process is not managed participatively or if communication is ineffective. Future research could explore the driving forces and resisting forces involved in school cultural transformation. In addition, further studies in other schools would help test the generalizability of this model within various inclusive education contexts.

5. Conclusions

The cultural transformation at SMP Negeri 10 Malang demonstrates that change toward a more inclusive school environment can occur gradually and systematically when supported by collective awareness, teacher commitment, and adaptive school policies. Using Kurt Lewin's change theory framework, this cultural shift can be understood as a series of processes beginning with the unfreezing of old values, followed by the formation of new norms and practices (change), and culminating in the reinforcement of inclusion as an institutional identity (refreeze). In the initial stage, the increasing number of students with special needs became a catalyst for teachers and the school to abandon conventional mindsets that were no longer relevant. The subsequent stage was marked by the strengthening of teacher collaborative culture, the development of more tolerant classroom culture, and the adjustment of pedagogical practices that encourage participation from all students. Finally, the integration of inclusive values into the school's vision and mission, regular evaluations, and nondiscriminatory policies in school activities indicate that change has become institutionalized and embedded as the new norm.

These findings indicate that value-based and collaborative change management can serve as an effective strategy for regular schools facing similar challenges, particularly when they lack formal inclusive education resources. Cultural transformation does not need to begin with major structural interventions; it can be built through consistent small habits, teacher dialogue, and the reinforcement of empathetic values in everyday interactions. Nevertheless, sustaining this transformation requires stronger institutional support in the future, including continuous professional development for teachers and the integration of more formal monitoring systems. Future research may expand the investigation to schools with different characteristics to examine variations in the change process and to test the effectiveness of refreezing strategies in maintaining an inclusive culture. Thus, this study reaffirms the importance of value-based change management as a foundation for school cultural transformation toward a truly inclusive environment.

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