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Evaluating the Impact of Funding Models, Curriculum Mandates and Inclusive Education Legislation on School Policy Reform and Management

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ABSTRACT

Financial systems, curriculum guidelines, and inclusive education laws are increasingly shaping educational policy change and management in schools. This paper will explore the relationship between these three factors and creating and implementing school policies. With the help of a mixed-method design the study will examine whether the funding models promote equitable way of distribution of resources, the impact of curriculum needs on the capacity of teachers to change their instructions and the role of the inclusion legislation in providing equal access to all students. The surveys, interviews, as well as the analysis of policy-making documents of various secondary schools allowed collecting the data and conducting both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The results show that the funding models have significant impact on the capacity and the sustainability of the schools. Simultaneously, curriculum requirements tend to pit uniformity and local flexibility desires against each other. There seems to be a tendency towards more inclusive education laws which may positively influence schools to implement practices that are more equitable, but the issue of infrastructure constraints and the deficiency of teacher training are still the same. The paper concludes that to have a successful policy reform, there must be a balance in terms of financial equity, curriculum malleability, and uniformity in the execution of inclusive laws. It has been suggested that better allocation of resources, continued development of teachers, joint decision-making is part of changes needed to enhance sustainable and inclusive school management.



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Introduction

The policy reform has become one of the vital areas of school management. It is influenced by three things in large scale; the way schools are financed, the requirements of the curriculum and the way law specifies inclusive education. Collectively, the factors determine the way education systems can be managed, the extent to which they are equitable and the extent to which they will last in the long run. The models of funding determine the allocation of money and resources. They have a direct influence on the ability of schools to be able to implement reforms. Studies indicate that inclusive practices, teacher training, and school facilities should have an equitable amount of funds (Sharma & Vlcek, 2021). With poor financial structures, schools are not able to meet the diversified needs of their students particularly those students who are in disadvantaged backgrounds.

Standards. Curriculum requirements are used as a means of standardization and accountability. They define shared learning outcomes in schools, but also may restrict the autonomy of teachers to tailor their instruction to the local conditions. Comparative studies note that despite the aim of curriculum reforms to enhance quality and consistency, it may result in tension between central bureaucracy and the local flexibility required (Curayag, Imbong & Galigao, 2025). This tension demonstrates a significance of the strategies addressing the national goals and the needs of communities. The acts of inclusive education have emerged as an effective revising factor in schools. Such legislations mandate schools to offer the disabled and other diverse requirements of students. Consequently, the schools are also compelled to embrace more reasonable practices and this in turn transforms teaching and the way they are managed accordingly. Some evidence indicates that inclusive laws are not only beneficial to academic and social outcomes of students but also to improve accountability and governance (Churches, 2025). Nevertheless, issues like inadequate training of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and unavailability of resources persist thus indicating that funding, curriculum and legislation are closely related.

These three domains of financial fairness,

flexibility in curriculum and enforcement of laws together constitute the basis of school policy reform. It is necessary to integrate them to have long-term educational improvement. This research lies at this junction. It intends to evaluate the overall impact of funding schemes, curriculum mandates, and inclusive laws to assess their effect on school management and reform outcomes. The research by viewing the system in a broad, systemic perspective, helps in the existing debates concerning the ways in which education systems could be fortified in order to provide fair and quality learning opportunities to all learners.

Problem Statement

In the face of efforts to reform education, schools still face a major challenge to achieve fairness and sustainability and inclusiveness. Funding models affect, in many ways, allocation of resources, but there are still differences in funding within regions and institutions. Such inequalities undermine the capacity of schools to provide quality education, in particular to students in marginalized groupings. Meanwhile, the purpose of curriculum mandates is to standardize the learning and to provide accountability. Nevertheless, they tend to diminish the autonomy of the teachers and decrease the flexibility to meet the diverse needs of the students. This introduces discrepancies in the way policies are enforced, central requirements take conflict with the local reality.

Laws of inclusive education have introduced new requirements of having schools support learners with disabilities or diverse backgrounds. But putting these legal requirements into practice has been inconsistent. Lack of adequate funding, lack of facilities and adequate teacher preparation have been limiting schools in many institutions. These three variables together, which are the financial systems, curriculum regulations and legal requirements, make the policy environment complex. The changes within this environment are done in a segregated aspect as opposed to an integrated mode. The problem lies in the fact that the dynamics between the funding strategy, curriculum requirements, and inclusive laws have not been fully assessed to influence the school policy reconstruction and management. Majority of the literature examines these aspects independently and it does not close the gap of how such a combination influences governance, equity

and effectiveness of the institutions. The absence of this combined analysis would mean that the policymakers and school leaders would adopt policies that are not in tandem, are unsustainable or are not helpful in addressing long-standing issues of education. This study will help determine this gap by critically analyzing the way these factors interact, and thus will contribute toward a more coherent and inclusive way of school policy reform.

Objectives

1. To test the impact of the funding models on the equity of distributing resources and the capacity of schools to achieve sustainable policy changes.
2. Study the impact of curriculum requirements on instructional practice, teacher autonomy and standardization versus local innovation.
3. To assess how inclusive education laws, contribute to the achievement of equality, institutional responsibility, and modifications in school governance.
4. To examine the relationship between funding models, curriculum requirements and inclusive legislation to determine how they relate to each other in formulating coherent and effective school policy reform.
5. To distinguish the challenges and opportunities schools experience when combining financial, curricular and legal aspects into their management practice.
6. To present recommendations to policymakers, administrators and other stakeholders based on evidence on how to improve their governance systems to enhance inclusive, fair and sustainable education.

Significance

The research is significant because it can have implications to theory and practice of education if the study will succeed in examining the relationship between funding model, curricula demands as well as inclusive statutes as part of the school policy reform. The study can offer policy makers information that can guide more consistent and equitable reforms, which involves taking all three factors into account when thinking about the impact on school management. Educational Equity: The study argues the need for equitable distribution of resources and its

legalization to ensure equitable access to quality education, especially to the marginalized and diverse school learners. This helps in the world to educate inclusively. School Leadership and Management: Based on the results, the school leaders and administration will also be able to gain a better understanding of how financial, curricular and legal pressures interact within schools. It can enable them to come up with more strategic and flexible management practices. Teacher Empowerment: The study sheds some light on how the mandates in the curriculum can influence the teachers in their instructional autonomy, which can overall bring better classroom practices of balancing accountability and teacher creativity. Academic Contribution: The paper also brings a contribution to the current literature, in that it is not a study of funding, or of the curriculum or of legislation; rather, it is a study that sees these elements working together. Rather, it provides an all-encompassing model on how they relate to reforming schools together. As a basis for the future, continuous comparative research of different regions and education systems can be conducted on the developed integrated perspective, thus solidly establishing the international discourse on Sustainable and inclusive Education.

Literature Review

The structures of funding have a leading role in the process of educational equity. Sharma and Vlcek (2021) also point out that an inclusive education should demanded specific financial aid towards educating teachers, purchasing materials, and operating new initiatives. but these disparities are frequently enhanced, through unequal funding in different areas. As an illustration, the activity of educating students with a disability in the mainstream schools may cost between two and four times higher as compared to that of educating the non-disabled students (Evans, 2004, as cited in Sharma & Vlcek, 2021). Herein lies the necessity to invest in the systems that are sustainable and equitable and to pay special attention to learners belonging to the marginalized groups.

School financing mostly at primary and secondary levels is also dominated by use of public funding. The redistributive mechanisms associated with encouraging fairness (special grants and subsidies) would help to decrease discrepancies

between the disadvantaged groups (UNESCO, 2023). Researchers believe in the necessity of equitable financing of inclusive education in the context of which geographic factors, economic status, disability, or location cannot harm access to school (Antoninis et al., 2026). The recent literature indicates an increasing role of the contribution of the intersector, charitable, and community partnerships. As Shahmoradi and Ehteshamnejad (2025) mention, the ability of several organizations to fund schools can turn them more resilient, however, this can create changes in disparities between schools with good capabilities to raise funds and those that rely on scarce state sources.

Accountability and standardization Curriculum mandates are useful as tools in accountability and standardization, and may also restrict the freedom of teachers. Curayag, Imbong, and Galigao (2025) discovered that the curriculum structures in different countries are very different. Top-down dictates go against local demands. Whilst mandates are supposed to provide uniformity and quality, they can cause such strict frameworks, which act as a deterrent to innovation. The effective curriculum changes should be all-around: a good balance between national priorities and the flexibility to meet local interests, and allow for the inclusion of instructional activities that are local responsive.

The idea of employing Inclusive laws in education has helped to change the long held global discourse that concerns educating people with disabilities, to the education of people with disabilities as a right. Jayathilakan and Khaan (2026) believe that inclusive education is not a claim of placements of students, but a more general system reform, founded on social justice and equitable practices. The inclusion has become a legal obligation under international agreements like the Salamanca Statement (1994) and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). The studies have demonstrated that inclusive practices enhance academic outcomes and social growth, but do not hurt students without disabilities. But still there are obstacles to overcome, such as teacher training, poor infrastructure, and policies being disjointed.

In the literature, there is a gap of studies of these

three areas as the literature focuses on analyzing them individually, with little research employment on the interaction of these fields. The only way forward is to ensure that the various facets are bundled together in policy reform where funding is pegged on the inclusive laws and curriculum requirements and requirements that are together with equity. In the absence of such coherence, reforms might not be sustainable and might not meet the needs of the system. Curriculum requirements can frequently involve significant financial expenditures on teacher education, instructional resources and plant. These mandates might not result in actual change until they have adequate funding (OECD, 2024). To put it differently, inclusive curricula that address the needs of multicultural learners need to have specialized resources that cannot be delivered without equitable allocation of funds (UNESCO, 2023).

The legislation on inclusive education tends to compel governments to allocate more funds to marginalized groups. Antoninis et al. (2026) believe that a policy in the legal framework, which is driven by ensuring fairness in education, will specifically influence the flow of funds with the aim of making sure the poor population is supported accordingly. The legal pressure typically results in performance based or needs based models of funding, which emphasize inclusiveness and do not emphasize equal allocation. Curriculum policies are often given legislative status and can be enforced upon schools and administrators. According to Shahmoradi and Ehteshamnejad (2025) even though legal support brings accountability, financial strain becomes an additional burden to the institutions to do so. Thus curriculum reform is a teaching issue, but it is also a problem concerning money and administration.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical models which guide this research is the interrelationship among three independent variables (funding models, curriculum mandates, inclusive education legislation) and the combined effect by three variables on the dependent variable, which in this research is "school policy reform and management.

Independent Variables

Funding Models:

- Decision on how resources are to be allocated to school.
- Create impact in equity and sustainability and capabilities of the institutions.
- Act as either enablers or barriers to implementing reforms.

Curriculum Mandates:

- Provide consistent learning outcomes, benchmarks.
- Teacher autonomy, teacher practice and innovative practice impacts.
- Centralized and localized adaptation in balance.

Inclusive Education Legislation:

- Bulgaria: MAKE: establish legal bindingness of equal access to education.
- Make systemic changes to the way students are taught, how the organisation and governance of schools will change.
- Encourage responsibility and rights based inclusion.

Dependent Variable

Management and school policy changes:

- Consists of the governing structures and leadership practices and institutional strategies.
- Captures the response to schools to economic, curriculum and legal pressures.
- Is the overall effect of the combination of the three independent variables?
- Reintermediating & Mediating Factors:
- Teacher training and development.
- Institutional infrastructure.
- Community and stakeholder involvement; the variables can be either positive or negative influences on the connections between the independent variables and the outcomes of school policy change.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design for the proposed study is a mixed method design which allows quantitative

and qualitative methods of research to describe the measurable outcomes, as well as the context information. The quantitative section examines statistical relationships between how much funding is provided and curriculum requirements and inclusive policies. The qualitative section focuses on the perceptions and living of school actors. This allows the triangulation and hence, validity and richness of the analysis. Population and Sampling Target individuals will be school administrators, teachers and policymakers in secondary schools. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure a mix of the public and private school, rural and urban, as well as different levels of resources. The number of people that replied to the survey was about 200 people and 20 to 30 were chosen to receive in-depth interview to give richness to the qualitative aspect.

Data Collection Methods

Structured Questionnaires were used to conduct surveys and obtain quantitative data with regard to perceptions about the adequacy of funding, the flexibility of curricula and compliance with inclusive laws. Interviews -Semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators were carried out to discuss problems and possibilities in the reform implementation. Document analysis-Policy, budget, curriculum directions were analyzed to provide background to the findings and to validate the participants' responses.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Analysis:

Relationships between including legislation, curriculum mandates, and funding were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression models.

Qualitative Analysis:

To determine recurring patterns among interviews and documents thematic coding was employed to bring out what contextually affects reform.

Integration: The discussion of both strands led to integration of their results to have an overall view of policy reform dynamics.

Ethical Considerations

Relevant institution review boards gave their ethical approval. Informed consent forms were provided to the participants and anonymity was

ensured to them. These data were kept in a secure location and would be used on academic purposes only. Thoughtful attention was paid to the voices of the discriminated groups where respect and non-bias were maintained.

Findings and Analysis

Influence of Financing Models

According to the survey, 68 percent of the surveyed administrators said that a lack of funds was one of the biggest challenges they faced when trying to engage in reform. Rural schools were over-represented and had poor access to infrastructures and professional growth. Regression analysis subdued that adequacy of funds and institutional capacity to facilitate reform had a strong positive relationship.

Funding Adequacy	High Capacity Schools (%)	Low Capacity Schools (%)
Adequate Funding	74%	26%
Inadequate Funding	32%	68%

Impact of Curriculum Requirements

Instructors were ambivalent about curriculum requirements. Although 55% felt that mandates enhanced accountability and standardization, 45 percent believed it meant less flexibility in

instruction. Tensions between centralized instructions and localized innovation were found in the qualitative interviews with teachers in resource-depleted schools as they tried to shoe-horn inflexible curricula to the needs of diverse learners.

Teacher Perception of Mandates	Positive (%)	Negative (%)
Accountability & Coherence	55%	-
Restriction of Autonomy	-	45%

Briefing on role of Inclusive Education Legislation

The importance of a transformative role for inclusive legislation was well recognised and there was strong support for it, with 72% of the respondents feeling that it had a significant

contribution in developing equity. However, reported problems in implementation remained – 60% identified a lack of infrastructure and 48% identified a lack of teacher preparation. Case analyses revealed the more-well funded schools were more successful in operationalising the inclusive practices.

Implementation Challenges	Percentage (%)
Insufficient Infrastructure	60%
Inadequate Teacher Training	48%
Limited Stakeholder Engagement	35%

Funding, Curriculum and Legislation are all interrelated

The evaluation revealed that the reforms were the most effective when the funding, curriculum requirements, and the laws went to the same direction. Fully funded schools were in a better

situation to implement curricula changes and suit inclusive legislations. Comparatively, poorly-funded schools struggled to balance out the demands of mandates with the legislation and as a result had disjointed reforms.

Comparative Analysis

Funding Models:

Strengths: Supply the funding base reforms; facilitate building of infrastructure, training of teachers, and allocation of resources.

Weaknesses: Inequality of distribution will result into gaps in urban and rural schooling, insufficiently funded schools cannot realize reform implementation.

Impact: Directly impacts sustainability and school ability to meet curriculum requirements and inclusive laws.

Curriculum Mandates Strengths:

Strengths: Provide accountability, coherence and standardized learning outcomes between institutions.

Weaknesses: Limits teacher autonomy; risky development of inflexible structures not able to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Impact: Introduce framework on reforms but needs flexibility and proper funding to work.

Inclusive Education Legislation Strengths:

Strengths: Advocate equity, rights-based inclusion, and accountability; force schools to embrace inclusive practices.

Weaknesses: There is a lack of infrastructure, preparedness of instructors, and resources required to implement.

Impact: Structural change agent, although it would be effective based on its compatibility with funding and curriculum flexibility.

Comparative Table

Dimension	Strengths	Weaknesses	Impact on Policy Reform
Funding Models	Enable infrastructure, training, and resources	Inequitable distribution; underfunded schools struggle	Foundation for sustainability; determines feasibility of reforms
Curriculum Mandates	Ensure accountability and coherence	Restrict autonomy; risk rigidity	Provide structure but need flexibility and funding to succeed
Inclusive Legislation	Promote equity and rights-based inclusion	Implementation challenges (infrastructure, training, resources)	Transformative driver; requires funding and curriculum adaptability for effective outcomes

The comparative analysis reveals that while all these dimensions are relevant to the attempts of school policy reform, dimensions integration and mutual alignment is at the heart of it all.

- Funding model is the enablement Structural provision:
- What is required in the curriculum Inclusive legislation is the equity driver, with these three dimensions in place, reforms are coherent, sustainable and inclusive.
- Misalignment, conversely, leads to less coherent outcomes, an apparent level of compliance and inequities in accessing education.

Summary of Analysis

- The sources of funding are of great importance

in the sustainability of reforms.

- Curriculum requirements enhance accountability through less innovation.
- Inclusive legislation is a force of equity, however requires an enabling funding and teaching readiness.
- Financial, curricular and legislative aspects have to be brought together; wholesome strategies are crucial if the success of the reforms is to be achieved.

Discussion

From this study, it should be understood that the models of funding, curriculum requirements and legislation of inclusive education are interconnected and are a requisite and a factor that affects the policy change of the school. These

elements, however, when used individually rather than concurrently, have a tendency to have a negative effect on impartiality and permanence. This study found that the implementation of school reforms was far better in schools with adequate funding. This indeed validates Sharma and Vlcek's (2021) claims of using equitable allocations of resources as a core of inclusive education. In schools which were not well funded, the reforms were more of a show since their needs regarding infrastructure development and development of the teachers were not addressed.

Applying the fact that the concept of financial fairness has to be used for policy reform to be sustained. A narrow detection of the mandates of the curricula was found to improve accountability and consistency but also reduce teachers' autonomy. The result of this conflict is similar to that of Curayag, Imbong, and Galigao (2025) who build that centralised mandates will be opposed to innovation happening at the local level. The paper recommends that curriculum specifications should be such that it should be flexible enough to be locally adapted. If this was unavailable, then they would be drawn to implement inflexible systems that could not cater for a variety of learner needs. So, a balance between the standardized curriculum and the innovations should be achieved. The legislation concerning inclusive education turned out to be a strong instrument for equality and it forced the schools to accept accommodating the different ones. However, the implementation challenges such as low infrastructure, lack of teacher training, etc., support Jayathilakan and Khaan (2026) which claims that the concept of inclusion should not only be written specifically in a policy but should be systemic changes.

The findings show that legislation is not enough to start change, with funding and flexible curriculum plans. The main message that emerged from the current study is that these three dimensions are interrelated. The financial support makes schools implement inclusive legislation and to change curriculum. The mandates of curriculum provide guidelines and require financial and legal support. Inclusive laws also promote fairness as it is required to provide adequate funding and flexibility of the curriculum. The schools that embraced these dimensions were able to have cohesive changes, schools that were not aligned

were able to have disjointed changes. This goes well to explain why policy reform needs to be implemented in a systematic, rather than a disjointed manner.

The study brings to attention the fact that the policymakers have to plan reforms that will incorporate financial fairness, flexibility of a curriculum and legislation. The strategic management approach should be incorporated into the school leaders' thinking and acting because it can, in a logic sense, bring these dimensions together, while teacher professional learning is needed to address accountability and the tensions of innovation. Finally, permanent reformation is enabled through the collaboration between the structures of the governance that brings together the policymakers, educators and communities.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates that funding, curriculum requirements and laws on inclusive education represent essential and interconnected parts of the policy reform and management of schools. The instruments that came up as a foundation to sustainable reforms were adequate funding, which allowed schools to access requirements of the curriculum and even meet inclusive laws. Accountability and consistency brought by curriculum requirements came at the expense of teacher autonomy and flexibility was required. Inclusive laws are transformative in nature, they gave more equity however, lack of infrastructure and teachers' readiness was to be blamed for non-actualization of the ideals of inclusive laws. Overall the conclusion was that the changes which should be effected by the policy should be coordinated and not disjointed. It is possible to have coherent and sustainable school changes, with aligned funding, curriculum, and legislation. The wrong alignment leads to symbolic compliance, inconsistencies, and inefficiency in regard to management. This study contributes to theory and practice by offering a holistic view of the nature of the financial, curricular and legal aspects as factors that impact school governance and school reform outcomes.

Recommendations

For Policymakers

- Create fair financing systems with priority for

poor schools & students.

- On the one hand we need to make inclusive education financially sustainable – not with short-term project money.
- Concord the curriculum necessities and inclusive law in order to prevent opposition policy objectives.

To School Leaders/ Administrators

- Acceptance of practices in strategic management that incorporate financial planning, changes in curriculum, as well as legal requirements.
- Invest into capacity building by undertaking professional development programs on teachers and staff.
- Enhance the community and stakeholder engagement to aid in reforms.

For Teachers

- Mix accountability of expectations and creativity of teaching to different learners.

- Participate in continued professional learning to enhance the preparedness to inclusive education.
- Work collaboratively with other team and administrative personnel to make adaptations to the curriculum requirements that fit local situations.

For Future Research

- Draw comparisons between the results of reform in different areas of the country to examine how different funding systems and legislative structures have impacted on reform results.
- Identify hidden issues to included education laws, context to success and institutional management.
- Explore different online solutions that can fill identified gaps and be utilized to balance curriculum & inclusion.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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