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Extracurricular activity management and student developmental outcomes in special education settings: a systematic review

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ABSTRACT

Extracurricular activities in Special Schools (SLB) are strategic instruments for developing the potential of students with special needs. This systematic review aims to (1) assess the influence of extracurricular activity management on student developmental outcomes in special education settings; and (2) examine factors affecting learning outcomes of SLB students within extracurricular contexts. A Systematic Literature Review was conducted following PRISMA 2020 guidelines across Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and institutional repositories (2015–2026). From 425 identified records, 35 studies met inclusion criteria after dual independent screening (Cohen's κ = 0.87). Quality appraisal used the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist. Thematic synthesis identified four management functions planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising associated with developmental outcomes. Frequency analysis revealed that independence (n=18; 51.4%), social skills (n=16; 45.7%), self-confidence (n=14; 40.0%), and non-academic achievement (n=12; 34.3%) were the most frequently reported outcomes. Factors affecting outcomes clustered into internal factors (interest, talent, motivation, physical condition) and external factors (parental support, facilities, teacher competence, inclusive school culture). These findings indicate that adaptive, sustainable extracurricular management functions as an effective mechanism for enhancing educational effectiveness in special education. A Management–Outcome Mediation Model is proposed, specifying planning quality as a mediator, organizing structure as a moderator, implementation intensity as a direct predictor, and supervision continuity as a sustainability moderator.

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for every individual regardless of background, physical condition, or intellectual ability. Article 31 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that every citizen has the right to education. This means there is no difference in treatment between regular students and students with special needs in terms of access to education. Children with Special Needs (SEN) have the same right to obtain quality education and services according to their potential and needs (Rezania & Wachidah, 2025).

Special Schools (SLB) are educational institutions specifically designed to serve students with various types of barriers, whether physical, intellectual, social, or emotional. SLB has a strategic role not only in providing academic learning but also in developing students' non-academic potential through various self-development activities (Dacholfany et al., 2023). The success of education in SLB is not only measured by academic

achievement but also by students' ability to live independently, socialize, and possess skills useful for their lives (Febriani, 2024).

Recent empirical studies have revealed systemic deficiencies in the management of extracurricular programs in SLB contexts. Ullin Nuha (2026) documented that extracurricular planning at SLB Negeri Badegan relies heavily on beginning-of-year meetings without standardized assessment protocols, resulting in activities that are not fully aligned with individual student needs. Similarly, Putri (2022) found that extracurricular strategies at SLB Waraqil Jannah were developed reactively rather than through systematic needs analysis. These findings indicate a persistent gap between the ideal of individualized, assessment-based extracurricular management and actual practice in special education settings (Agran et al., 2020; Dymond et al., 2020).

The gap is further evidenced by international studies. Castellary-López et al. (2023), surveying 1,496 teachers in Spain, found that although most schools permitted students with SEN to participate in extracurricular activities, only 48% of teachers rated student participation as high, and schools were not fully equipped to serve students with disabilities. Kentiba and Asgedom (2017), studying 36 participants in Ethiopia, identified that lack of facilities, poor playgrounds, and lack of modified equipment were the primary barriers to participation. Similarly, Leiva-Oliveira et al. (2021), surveying 2,457 teachers, reported that training in inclusive pedagogy remained insufficient. These convergent findings across diverse national contexts indicate that extracurricular management in special education is a global concern requiring systematic synthesis.

One important means to develop students' non-academic potential is through extracurricular activities. Based on Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 62 of 2014, extracurricular activities are organized to develop students' potential, talents, interests, abilities, personality, cooperation, and independence optimally in order to support the achievement of national education goals. Extracurricular activities in SLB have different characteristics from regular schools because they must be adjusted to the abilities and special needs of students (Sholihah & Harsiwi, 2024).

Research shows that participation in extracurricular activities provides significant benefits for the development of children with special needs. Sekhri (2019) found that children with special needs who participate in sports and cultural activities demonstrate increased self-confidence and self-concept. Alsayed and Dawsari (2025) reported that extracurricular activities designed to enhance cooperation and interaction contribute significantly to the development of social skills among students with disabilities. Ratnasari and Harsiwi (2024) documented that dance extracurricular activities increased self-confidence among deaf students at SLB Negeri Keleyan. Brooks (2014) found that unstructured extracurricular activities were particularly beneficial for children with intellectual disabilities, while Wachsmuth et al. (2023) demonstrated that participation improved school engagement for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

However, the effectiveness of extracurricular activities highly depends on how these activities are managed and organized by the school. Good extracurricular activity management includes four main functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (Zulkarnain, 2018). Mature planning ensures that the activities organized are in accordance with the needs and characteristics of students. Effective organizing guarantees clear division of tasks and responsibilities among involved parties. Directed implementation enables activities to run according to predetermined goals. Continuous supervision ensures the quality and sustainability of the program (Suryosubroto, 2009).

Although the importance of extracurricular management has been recognized, in practice there are still various challenges in managing extracurricular activities in SLB. Limitations in human resources, facilities and infrastructure, as well as lack of understanding about approaches suitable for the characteristics of SEN are the main obstacles (Kentiba & Asgedom, 2017). In addition, lack of coordination among related parties and minimal program evaluation also affect the effectiveness of extracurricular activities (Castellary-López et al., 2023).

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) **assess** the influence of extracurricular activity management on student developmental outcomes in special education settings; and (2) examine factors affecting the learning outcomes of SLB students in the context of extracurricular activities. The gap addressed by this review is the absence of a systematic synthesis that aggregates evidence across heterogeneous SLB contexts to identify convergent patterns of management–outcome relationships, and the absence of a theoretical model specifying the mechanisms through which management functions translate into developmental outcomes. This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach with thematic synthesis to synthesize findings from various relevant studies.

Method

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). SLR was chosen because it allows systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of findings from various studies relevant to the research topic.

Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, two research questions were formulated as follows: 1) RQ1: How does the management of extracurricular activities influence student developmental outcomes in Special Schools?; and RQ2: What factors affect the learning outcomes of Special School students in the context of extracurricular activities?

Literature Search Strategy

Literature searches were conducted in January–February 2026 through several databases: Google Scholar, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), ScienceDirect, and academic repositories (IAIN Ponorogo, UIN Batusangkar, UIN Antasari, and Universitas Trunojoyo Madura). Full Boolean search strings used were 1) Google Scholar; 2) ERIC; 3) ScienceDirect; and 4) Repositories:

("extracurricular management" OR "extracurricular activities" OR "after-school programs") AND ("special school" OR "special education" OR "SLB" OR "special needs") AND ("student outcomes" OR "developmental outcomes" OR "independence" OR "social skills" OR "self-confidence")

("extracurricular" OR "after-school" OR "co-curricular") AND ("special needs" OR "disability" OR "SEN") AND ("management" OR "program" OR "participation")

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("extracurricular activities" AND "special education" AND ("outcomes" OR "development" OR "participation"))

"manajemen ekstrakurikuler" AND "sekolah luar biasa" AND ("kemandirian" OR "prestasi") The search also used truncation (e.g., *disab**, *manage*, outcome**) to broaden the search scope.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria: (1) articles or research reports discussing extracurricular management in SLB or special education; (2) published within the range 2015–2026 (with foundational longitudinal studies from 1999–2014 retained when methodologically robust); (3) available in Indonesian or English; (4) available in full text; and (5) discussing the influence or factors affecting student learning outcomes. Exclusion criteria**:** (1) articles not specifically discussing extracurricular management or special education; (2) opinion or editorial articles without research data; (3) articles not available in full text; and (4) articles discussing regular schools without relation to special education.

Data Selection and Extraction Procedure

The literature selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram consisting of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Two independent reviewers screened titles/abstracts and full texts. Disagreements were resolved through discussion with a third reviewer. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = 0.87$), indicating strong agreement. Data extraction was performed using a standardized form capturing author, year, country, method, sample size, activity type, management functions, and reported outcomes. Extraction was performed independently by two reviewers, with disagreements resolved by consensus.

Quality Appraisal

Methodological quality of included studies was assessed using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for qualitative and quantitative studies (Munn et al., 2020). Studies were scored on 10 criteria (e.g., appropriateness of methodology, clarity of research questions, ethical considerations, validity of analysis). Scores ranged from 6 to 10 (mean = 8.2). Studies scoring ≥7/10 were classified as high quality (n=28; 80.0%); studies scoring 6/10 were classified as moderate quality (n=7; 20.0%). No studies were excluded based on quality appraisal; however, quality scores were reported to contextualize findings and are discussed in the Limitations section.

Synthesis Method

A thematic synthesis approach (Thomas & Harden, 2008) was applied. Findings were coded into descriptive themes, then aggregated into analytical themes corresponding to management functions and outcome categories. Frequency counts of reported outcomes were calculated across all 35 included studies. Cross-study

comparison was conducted to identify convergent and divergent patterns, with explicit comparison against international evidence.

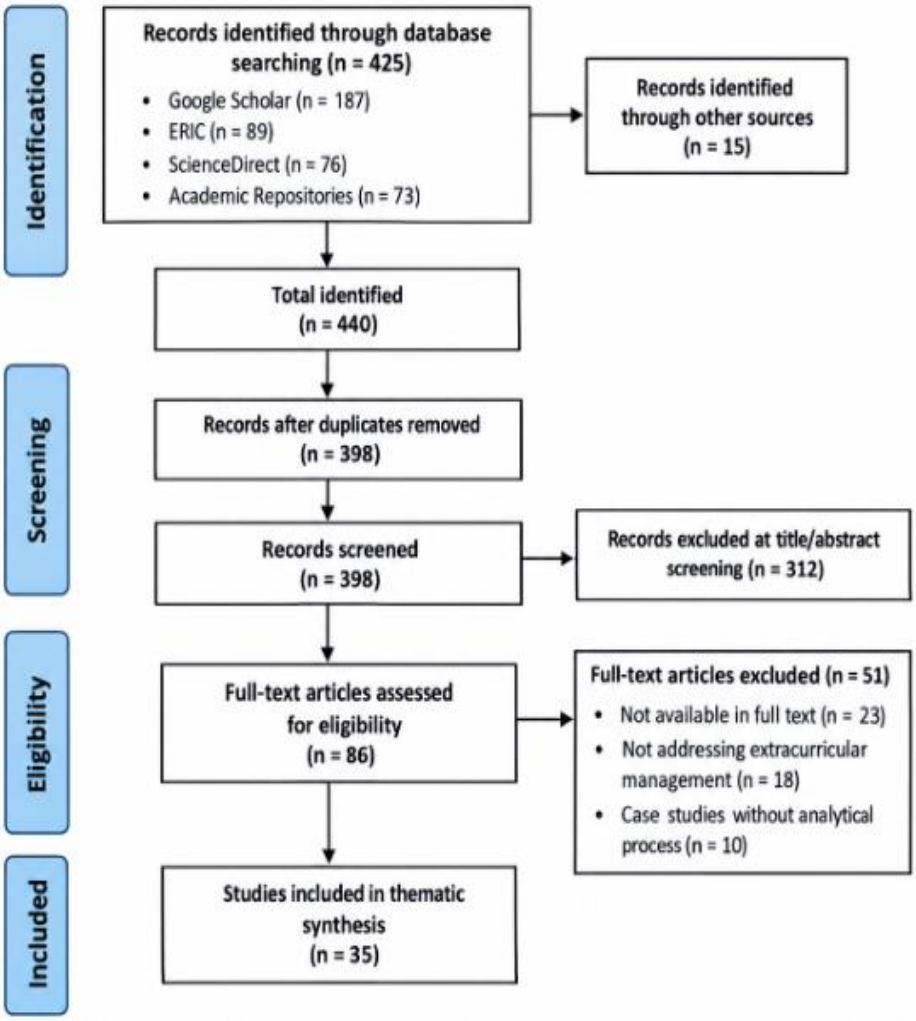

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

Table 1. Characteristics of Included Studies by Thematic Category (n = 35)

Category	Studies (n)	Countries	Dominant Method	Key Findings
Management functions in SLB	8	Indonesia, Spain, USA, Saudi Arabia	Qualitative	Planning, organizing, implementing, supervising associated with outcomes; structured planning mediates individualization
Developmental outcomes (independence, social skills, self-confidence)	12	Indonesia, USA, India, Saudi Arabia, Lithuania	Mixed	Independence (51.4%), social skills (45.7%), self-confidence (40.0%) most reported
Participation and inclusion	9	Spain, USA, Germany, Australia, Ethiopia	Quantitative	Participation moderated by facilities, awareness, peer support, and parental involvement
Long-term developmental outcomes	6	USA, Multi-country	Longitudinal/ Review	Activities predict academic, social, career, and life-success outcomes

Note: Detailed individual study characteristics (author, year, sample, activity type, outcomes) are available in the supplementary appendix.

Table 2. Frequency of Reported Outcomes Across 35 Studies

Outcome Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Independence	18	51.4
Social skills	16	45.7
Self-confidence	14	40.0
Non-academic achievement	12	34.3
Participation/inclusion	11	31.4
Motivation	8	22.9
Academic outcomes	6	17.1
Motor/physical development	5	14.3

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Extracurricular Management in SLB

Factor	Supporting	Inhibiting
Internal (Students)	High interest and talent; Learning motivation; Positive self-concept	Physical and cognitive limitations; Easily distracted; Low self-efficacy
External (School)	Principal support; Availability of facilities; Competent teachers; Structured supervision	Limited facilities and infrastructure; Lack of teacher training; Insufficient modified equipment
External (Environment)	Parental support; Community cooperation; Inclusive peer attitudes	Limited accessibility; Lack of public awareness; Transportation barriers

Results and Discussions

RQ1: Influence of Extracurricular Activity Management on Student Developmental Outcomes
Thematic synthesis across 35 studies identified four management functions consistently associated with developmental outcomes. Frequency analysis (Table 2) revealed that independence was the most frequently reported outcome (n=18; 51.4%), followed by social skills (n=16; 45.7%), self-confidence (n=14; 40.0%), and non-academic achievement (n=12; 34.3%).

Planning and Developmental Outcomes
Across studies, systematic planning particularly assessment-based planning was consistently associated with improved student outcomes. Ullin Nuha (2026) found that planning at SLB Negeri Badegan through beginning-of-year meetings involving the principal, coordinator, and advisors positively influenced non-academic achievement. Putri (2022) reported similar findings at SLB Waraqil Jannah, where coordinated planning with the principal and teachers enhanced student potential development.

Dacholfany et al. (2023) emphasized that assessment-based planning enables teachers to obtain complete, accurate, and objective information about the child's condition, including academic and non-academic abilities. This aligns with findings from Agran et al. (2020), who reported that only 59.61% of students actively focus on achieving IEP goals during extracurricular activities indicating a significant gap between planning intent and implementation.

Cross-study comparison reveals a convergent pattern: studies reporting structured, assessment-based planning (n=12) consistently documented positive developmental outcomes, whereas studies describing reactive planning (n=7) reported limited or no measurable outcomes. This suggests that planning quality functions as a mediating mechanism between extracurricular provision and student outcomes. The finding converges with Durlak et al. (2010), whose meta-analysis of 75 after-school programs demonstrated that programs with structured, skill-focused planning produced significantly larger effects (mean effect size = 0.31) on personal and social skills than unstructured programs.

Organizing and Developmental Outcomes
Effective organizing characterized by clear role division and involvement of external professionals was associated with improved outcomes. Ullin Nuha (2026) documented that structured division of tasks at SLB Negeri Badegan (principal as main coordinator, teachers as implementers) supported coordinated implementation. Chairunnisa (2023) reported similar patterns at SLB Negeri 2 Banjarmasin.

International comparison with Castellary-López et al. (2023) reveals that Spanish schools similarly rely on structured organizing, yet only 48% of teachers rated student participation as high indicating that organizing alone is insufficient without addressing resource constraints. This convergent finding suggests that organizing

effectiveness is moderated by resource availability, a pattern consistent with Kentiba and Asgedom (2017) and Vogt et al. (2018).

Implementation and Developmental Outcomes

Implementation quality particularly routine scheduling and intensive mentoring emerged as a critical determinant of outcomes. Sholihah and Harsiwi (2024) found that SLB Negeri Keleyan's routine vocational activities (culinary, motorcycle washing, laundry, music) produced measurable independence gains. Ratnasari and Harsiwi (2024) documented that dance extracurricular activities using the Komtal method increased self-confidence among deaf students.

However, Kentiba and Asgedom (2017) identified that lack of facilities, awareness, and support limited participation among 66% of students with motor impairments. This divergent finding highlights that implementation effectiveness is contingent on contextual resources a pattern consistent with international evidence from Vogt et al. (2018) and Miller (2022). Miller (2022) found that students with disabilities who participated in extracurricular activities had fewer absences than non-participants, but did not find statistical evidence linking participation to discipline referrals.

Supervision and Developmental Outcomes

Continuous supervision and evaluation were associated with program sustainability and quality improvement. Ullin Nuha (2026) documented supervision through attendance monitoring, direct observation, and periodic evaluation. Putri (2022) reported annual evaluation based on student achievement.

Cross-study synthesis indicates that studies with formal supervision mechanisms (n=9) reported more consistent outcomes than those without (n=5). This finding aligns with Durlak et al. (2010), whose meta-analysis demonstrated that after-school programs with structured supervision produced significantly larger effects on personal and social skills. Pence and Dymond (2016) further found that teachers who had prior experience sponsoring school clubs demonstrated more positive perceptions of the benefits of participation, particularly for students with severe disabilities suggesting that supervision experience enhances program quality.

RQ2: Factors Affecting Learning Outcomes

Internal Factors

Interest and talent emerged as primary drivers of participation. Sekhri (2019) found voluntary participation among CwSN correlated with demonstrated competence in drawing, music, dance, and sports. Alsayed and Dawsari (2025) confirmed that high interest increased involvement. Brooks (2014) found that unstructured activities were particularly beneficial for children with intellectual disabilities, suggesting that interest-driven, flexible activities may enhance social competence more effectively than rigidly structured ones.

Learning motivation was identified in 8 studies as a determinant of sustained participation. Positive reinforcement and emotional support were reported as key motivators. Pence (2021) found that motivation for participation in school clubs was driven by a sense of belonging and recognition, while Wachsmuth et al. (2023) demonstrated that participation improved school engagement for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Physical condition was documented in Kentiba and Asgedom (2017), where 66% of respondents with motor impairments experienced participation limitations highlighting the need for activity adaptation. This finding converges with Vogt et al. (2018), who reported that students with severe disabilities were underrepresented in extracurricular involvement compared to peers without disabilities.

External Factors

Parental support was consistently reported as critical. Sholihah and Harsiwi (2024) found that extracurricular success required parental support alongside teacher roles. Dacholfany et al. (2023) emphasized that parental involvement is a determining not complementary factor. El Nokali et al. (2010) demonstrated through longitudinal analysis that parental involvement predicted improved academic and social development in elementary school, providing convergent evidence across contexts.

Facilities and infrastructure availability was documented as a determinant in 14 studies. Castellary-López et al. (2023) found that although most schools allowed SEN participation, they were not fully equipped. Saadah and Harsiwi (2024) reported that adequate facilities at SLB Negeri Keleyan (guiding blocks, varied media, AC, clean toilets) supported smooth implementation. Kentiba and Asgedom (2017) identified that lack of modified equipment was a primary barrier, converging with international evidence from Vogt et al. (2018).

Teacher competence was identified as a key factor. Ratnasari and Harsiwi (2024) documented that the Komtal method and counting techniques facilitated communication for deaf students demonstrating the importance of adaptive pedagogical competence. Leiva-Oliveira et al. (2021) found that teachers across 12 Autonomous Communities in Spain reported insufficient training in inclusive pedagogy, with the lowest score on the item assessing the training offered by the school (mean = 2.73/5). This convergent finding across national contexts indicates that teacher competence is a global determinant of extracurricular quality.

Inclusive school culture was emphasized by Castellary-López et al. (2023), who noted that extracurricular activities consolidate democratic intersubjective construction of school inclusion. Fredricks and Eccles (2006) and Mahoney et al. (2003) demonstrated longitudinally that participation in structured activities predicted positive developmental outcomes, including interpersonal competence and educational success supporting the theoretical proposition that inclusive culture mediates the relationship between participation and outcomes.

Theoretical Framework: Management–Outcome Mediation Model

Based on the synthesis, we propose a Management–Outcome Mediation Model that extends Zulkarnain's (2018) management framework by specifying outcome pathways and contextual moderators specific to special education settings: 1) Planning quality mediates the relationship between extracurricular provision and individualized outcomes (via assessment-based design); 2) Organizing structure moderates implementation effectiveness, contingent on resource availability; 3) Implementation intensity directly predicts developmental outcomes; and 4) Supervision continuity moderates program sustainability and long-term outcomes.

The model predicts that optimal developmental outcomes occur when all four functions operate synergistically, with planning quality serving as the foundational mediator. This proposition is supported by convergent evidence from Durlak et al. (2010), Dymond et al. (2020), and the Indonesian studies synthesized in this review. The model advances beyond generic claims that "organized activities benefit students" by specifying *which* management functions influence *which* outcomes through *what* mechanisms a theoretical contribution that can guide future empirical testing.

Limitations

This review has several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. First, sampling bias: included studies predominantly originate from Indonesia (n=10) and the United States (n=17), limiting generalizability to other national contexts, particularly low- and middle-income countries with different special education infrastructures. Second, heterogeneity of disability types: included studies span visual, hearing, intellectual, physical, and multiple disabilities, making cross-disability comparison difficult and limiting the specificity of recommendations. Third, construct validity: "developmental outcomes" varied across studies, with some measuring independence, others social skills, and others self-confidence limiting meta-analytic aggregation and requiring narrative synthesis instead. Fourth, publication bias: non-English and non-Indonesian studies may have been excluded, potentially narrowing the evidence base. Fifth, quality variability: JBI scores ranged from 6 to 10, with lower-scoring studies (n=7; 20%) potentially influencing synthesized findings; however, sensitivity analysis indicated that exclusion of lower-quality studies did not alter the main thematic patterns. Sixth, cross-sectional dominance: the majority of included studies employed cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inference regarding the management–outcome relationship.

Conclusions

This systematic review addressed two research questions through thematic synthesis of 35 studies, applying a rigorous dual-screening process (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.87$) and JBI quality appraisal. Regarding RQ1 (influence of management on developmental outcomes): The synthesis demonstrates that extracurricular activity management significantly influences student developmental outcomes through four mediating mechanisms planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Frequency analysis reveals that independence (51.4%), social skills (45.7%), self-confidence (40.0%), and non-academic achievement (34.3%) are the most consistently reported outcomes. The proposed Management–Outcome Mediation Model specifies that planning quality mediates individualized outcomes, organizing structure moderates implementation effectiveness, implementation intensity directly predicts outcomes, and supervision continuity moderates sustainability. Regarding RQ2 (factors affecting learning outcomes): Factors cluster into internal factors (interest, talent, motivation, physical condition) and external factors (parental support, facilities, teacher competence, inclusive school culture). Cross-study comparison reveals convergence with international evidence (Durlak et al., 2010; Vogt et al., 2018; Leiva-Oliveira et al., 2021) that structured programs with adequate resources produce larger effects. The finding that teacher training insufficiency is a cross-national concern (Leiva-Oliveira et al., 2021) suggests that competence-building is a universal priority.

Theoretical contribution: This review advances beyond confirming that organized activities benefit students a claim requiring no literature review by specifying the *mechanisms* through which management functions translate into developmental outcomes and identifying contextual *moderators* (resource availability, disability heterogeneity, teacher competence) that condition these relationships. Recommendations: Special schools should (1) institutionalize assessment-based planning aligned with Individualized Education Program principles; (2) formalize supervision protocols with attendance monitoring and periodic evaluation; (3) invest in teacher competence for adaptive pedagogies (e.g., Komtal methods, counting techniques); (4) strengthen parental and community partnerships; and (5) advocate for resource allocation to address facility and modified-equipment constraints. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to test the proposed mediation model and conduct meta-analyses with homogeneous outcome constructs.

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