

Holistic Education Management and Students' Adaptive Abilities: A Case Study at State Senior High School 10 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how holistic education management contributes to students' adaptive abilities in academic and social contexts at State Senior High School 10 Medan. In the face of 21st-century challenges, adaptability has become a critical skill, and holistic education offers a promising framework. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret patterns related to curriculum, pedagogy, collaboration, and school culture. Findings reveal four key components that support student adaptability. First, the integration of academic, character, social, and spiritual elements in the curriculum enhances students' academic and social resilience. Second, Project-Based Learning fosters critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork. Third, collaboration among schools, families, and communities strengthens social support and broadens learning experiences. Fourth, an inclusive school culture promotes empathy, tolerance, and flexible social skills. These practices significantly contribute to students' adaptive capacities but face constraints such as limited teacher competence and insufficient policy support. The study confirms that adaptability emerges from the integration of holistic curriculum, innovative learning, collaborative partnerships, and inclusive culture. It highlights the need for coherent education policies and sustained teacher development to scale such practices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Developments in education in the era of globalization and digitalization demand a new paradigm that focuses not only on academic achievement, but also on the holistic development of students. One approach that has gained widespread attention globally is holistic education management. Holistic education views students as whole individuals who need to be developed not only cognitively, but also emotionally, socially, characteristically, spiritually, and in terms of life skills. Various international studies show that this approach not only encourages academic

achievement but also strengthens students' ability to adapt to the dynamics of social and technological change (Rudiana, 2023; Sumiyati et al, 2025; Alistriana, Wulandari, & Abiyaksa, 2024).

International studies also show that implementing holistic education management through academic, spiritual, and technological integration can improve 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and students' ability to adapt to global challenges. For example, Rudiana's research introduces the Triangle of Education framework, which combines spirituality, entrepreneurship, and technology in learning. This framework has been proven effective in promoting students' morality, adaptability, and independence, while emphasizing the importance of teacher training, adaptive curriculum design, and innovative evaluation systems for optimal implementation (Rudiana, 2023).

On the other hand, a Scopus-based study conducted in Hong Kong by Chan and colleagues shows that the synergy between positive education and constructivist teaching has a significant impact on strengthening critical thinking skills and independent learning among secondary school students, which is one indicator of successful adaptation in the 21st century (Yuen, 2023). Similar research in the field of inclusive education also confirms that the implementation of an adaptive curriculum based on a holistic approach promotes a learning environment that is more inclusive, participatory, and adaptive to student diversity. (Syachbana & Rahmah, 2023).

However, the implementation of holistic education management is not without challenges. Several studies have revealed serious obstacles such as limited teacher competence, resistance to changes in school culture, and a lack of comprehensive resource and policy support (Alistriana et al., 2024; Sumiyati et al, 2025). This controversy has sparked differences of opinion among academics and education practitioners regarding the extent to which a holistic approach can be effectively implemented, especially in the context of public schools with limited budgets and policies.

Despite its potential, the implementation of holistic education management faces challenges, including limited teacher competence, resistance to cultural change in schools, and insufficient policy and resource support. This gap between the promise of holistic education and its practical challenges raises questions about how effectively it can be applied, particularly in public schools with constrained resources. Against this backdrop, SMA Negeri 10 Medan provides a relevant context for investigation. As a public school navigating digital transformation, global cultural integration, and complex social dynamics, it requires adaptive strategies to prepare students for contemporary challenges. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of holistic education management at SMA Negeri 10 Medan, assess its contribution to students' adaptability, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and offer recommendations for more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable education practices.

The significance of this research lies in two main aspects. First, this research is expected to contribute empirically to the development of international literature on the effectiveness of holistic education management, particularly in improving students' adaptive abilities. Second, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a practical reference for policymakers, school principals, teachers, and curriculum developers in designing more adaptive, inclusive, and student-centered education policies.

Based on the synthesis of previous studies, this research is grounded on the hypothesis that the implementation of holistic education management at SMA Negeri 10 Medan through curriculum integration, innovative learning methods, collaborative partnerships, and inclusive school culture positively contributes to strengthening students' adaptability in academic and social contexts. Conversely, limited teacher competence and policy support are hypothesized to serve as inhibiting factors that may reduce the optimal impact of this approach.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design because it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of implementing holistic education management in improving students' adaptability at SMA Negeri 10 Medan. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore the phenomenon comprehensively, understand the meaning of participants' experiences, and examine the holistic education practices carried out by the school in context. The case study design allows researchers to focus on one specific location to reveal the dynamics of policies, management strategies, and their impact on students in detail (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2018).

The sample size of 15–20 participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which is central to qualitative research. In case study research, the aim is not to generalize statistically but to generate in-depth insights from rich and diverse perspectives. Prior literature indicates that a range of 15–20 participants is often sufficient to capture recurring themes while still allowing for variation in experiences and viewpoints. This number is considered adequate to reach the point where no new information or themes emerge, ensuring both depth and credibility of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytic strategy because it provides a systematic yet flexible approach to identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The process involved several stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading and transcription, (2) initial coding to categorize meaningful units of information, (3) searching for broader themes that connect codes, (4) reviewing and refining themes to ensure consistency and representativeness, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final narrative supported by direct quotations. To enhance reliability, coding was checked by multiple researchers and discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached. Thematic analysis was chosen over other qualitative techniques, such as grounded theory or narrative analysis, because it allows for both deductive and inductive identification of themes while remaining closely aligned with the study's objectives namely, to explore how holistic education management contributes to student adaptability.

The research procedure was carried out through several interrelated stages. The initial stage began with a preliminary study through observation at SMA Negeri 10 Medan to map the holistic education management practices that had been implemented. After obtaining official permission from the school and the Education Office, the main data collection process was carried out by combining in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document review. The interviews were semi-structured so that the researchers could explore broader information related to implementation strategies, challenges, and the impact of holistic education management on students' adaptive abilities. Observations were used to directly monitor the learning process, extracurricular activities, and school culture, while the documentation study involved reviewing the curriculum, school policies, activity reports, and student learning outcome documents.

The research instruments used were semi-structured interview guidelines based on holistic education theory and student adaptability studies, observation sheets, and document analysis formats. Research tools included voice recorders, documentation cameras, and the NVivo qualitative data processing application to facilitate the data coding and analysis process. The use of this qualitative analysis software is in line with best practices in modern educational research because it helps researchers organize data systematically and improve the validity of interpretations. (Zamawe, 2015).

To ensure data validity, this study used triangulation of sources, methods, and researchers. Triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents, as well as confirming findings with key participants. The triangulation approach helped reduce potential subjective bias on the part of researchers and increased the reliability of the research results. (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the guidelines from (Clarke, 2021). The analysis process began with transcribing the interview and observation results verbatim, then

conducting initial coding to identify important themes related to the implementation of holistic education, supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on students' adaptive abilities. Next, the themes were categorized based on the relationships between concepts to obtain a comprehensive understanding. The analysis results are interpreted inductively so that the findings are sourced from authentic field data.

This study also pays attention to research ethics. Each participant was given complete information about the objectives, procedures, and benefits of the study through an informed consent form. The participants' identities were kept confidential, and they were given complete freedom to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable. This ethical approach is in line with international standards for educational research that prioritize informed participation and sensitivity to the socio-cultural context. (Creswell, 2015).

With this methodology, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how holistic education management is implemented at SMA Negeri 10 Medan and its contribution to improving students' adaptability. An in-depth qualitative approach is expected to produce empirical findings that are not only relevant to the local context but also enrich the international literature on the effectiveness of holistic education.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This study aims to examine the implementation of holistic education management at SMA Negeri 10 Medan and its contribution to students' adaptive abilities. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and document reviews, four main findings were obtained. Each finding is explained in the following table and narrative.

3.1.1 Holistic Curriculum Integration Improves Academic and Social Adaptation

Holistic curriculum integration is one of the strategic approaches in modern education to develop students' full potential. This approach not only emphasizes academic achievement but also combines character, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Widyastono, 2012). In the context of SMA Negeri 10 Medan, the implementation of a holistic curriculum aims to develop students who are adaptable to various challenges, both in the academic world and in their social environment.

Table 1. Indicators of Holistic Curriculum Implementation

Implementation Indicators	Impact on Adaptive Capacity	Supporting Data
The curriculum combines academic, character, social, and spiritual aspects.	Students are able to adapt to academic and social challenges	Principal Interview: "We emphasize academic values as well as character and collaboration" (W1)

The results of the study show that SMA Negeri 10 Medan has implemented a holistic curriculum that integrates academic, character, social, and spiritual dimensions. This integration helps students develop their ability to adapt to academic and social changes.

3.1.2 Project-Based Learning Promotes Readiness for Adaptation in the 21st Century

Technological developments, globalization, and rapid social change require students to have high adaptability and 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and effective communication. One learning strategy that is relevant in this context is Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which places students at the center of the learning process through real-world project-based activities (Zuhri & Afriani, 2025).

At SMA Negeri 10 Medan, the implementation of PjBL is aimed at integrating various subjects while training essential soft skills. Students not only learn academic concepts, but are also encouraged to find creative solutions to real problems, work in teams, and develop the ability to adapt to new situations (Rocha, Mendes, & Wardhani, 2025; Nagamalla, Geedipally, Bandu, & Suryadevara, 2024).

Table 2. Project-Based Learning Promotes 21st Century Adaptability

Implementation Indicators	Impact on Adaptive Capacity	Supporting Data
Teachers use the PjBL method to integrate subjects and soft skills.	Training students to think critically, creatively, and adapt quickly	PjBL program documentation: The "Green School Project" improves students' ability to manage environmental issues.

The school implements Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to integrate various subjects while instilling soft skills in students. For example, through the "Green School Project" program, students are involved in designing solutions to environmental problems at school. This activity trains problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptation to new situations. An international study by Kokotsaki et al. supports these findings. They state that PjBL not only improves students' conceptual understanding but also strengthens their adaptability, communication skills, and teamwork (Kokotsaki et al, 2016). This shows that the application of the PjBL method is an integral part of effective holistic education management.

3.1.3 Collaboration between Schools, Families, and Communities as a Factor Strengthening Adaptation

Synergistic collaboration between schools, families, and communities is an important pillar in creating an educational environment that supports student adaptation. In a holistic education management model, parental and community involvement not only strengthens social support, but also expands students' experiential capital through interactions outside the formal school context.

For example, collaborative e-learning models involving communities have been shown to improve students' adaptability to digital learning environments, with average scores increasing from 41.92 to 48.87 after intervention (Purbasari et al, 2025). These findings indicate that community involvement in the learning process not only supports content mastery, but also strengthens students' adaptive competencies (Afrianti, Viona, & Efriyadi, 2024).

Table 3. Collaboration between Schools, Families, and Communities as a Factor Strengthening Adaptation

Implementation Indicators	Impact on Adaptive Capacity	Supporting Data
Involvement of parents and community partners in holistic learning activities	Students find it easier to adapt to social and cultural contexts.	Parent interview: "We monitor and support the school project at home" (W5)

The study found that the success of holistic education management at SMA Negeri 10 Medan was greatly influenced by tripartite collaboration between the school, families, and the community. Parents were actively involved in supporting project-based learning at home, while the school established partnerships with the community to provide real-world learning experiences.

These findings are consistent with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and are reinforced by Epstein's research. The study shows that integrating family and community support into the learning process accelerates students' social adaptation and expands their life skills (Epstein, 2018).

3.1.4 Inclusive School Culture Promotes Social Flexibility

An inclusive school culture allows all students, regardless of their background, abilities, and identities, to actively participate in the learning process. This kind of environment encourages respect for differences, empathy between individuals, and creativity in social interactions. As a result, students become more adaptive to social dynamics and are able to communicate across differences more effectively.

Research by Agus Hidayat, Azwar Rahmat, and Al-Amin shows that inclusive learning environments have a significant positive impact on the development of students' social skills (Hidayat, Rahmat, & Al-Amin, 2024). Students become more capable of working together, respecting differences, and adapting to diverse social situations key skills in forming flexible social adaptation.

In addition, a study by Yasuko Futaba from the perspective of collectivistic culture in Japan found that a hierarchical school culture replaced by an adhocratic approach, namely an organizational culture that is collectively responsive and non-bureaucratic, encourages more effective inclusion practices (Futaba, 2016). In this kind of environment, diversity is seen as a shared asset and is addressed collectively, rather than being grouped or labeled bureaucratically.

Table 4. Inclusive School Culture Promotes Social Flexibility

Implementation Indicators	Impact on Adaptive Capacity	Supporting Data
The school creates a learning environment that values diversity and the participation of all students.	Students are more tolerant, flexible, and have adaptive social skills.	Activity observation: "Student Dialogue Forum" improves cross-cultural communication skills

An inclusive school culture enables students to appreciate differences, participate actively, and improve communication skills. Research by Sunardi et al. supports these findings, emphasizing that inclusive schools significantly improve social adaptation readiness (Prajalani, Sunardi, & Widyastono, 2021).

An inclusive school culture creates an educational environment that values diversity, encourages active participation, and trains cross-social communication skills. In this kind of atmosphere, students learn to respect differences, build empathy, and develop interpersonal flexibility that supports social adaptation, which is an important quality in this era of plurality and globalization.

Naurah Rohadatul Aisy & Imas Diana Aprilia show that inclusive education significantly strengthens the social interactions of students with special needs. The results of the study reveal an increase in communication skills, empathy, self-esteem, and stronger social awareness in an inclusive classroom environment (Aisy & Aprilia, 2025). The findings also indicate that students without special needs experience increased empathy and social awareness when learning alongside their peers with special needs.

3.2 Discussion

The results of this study confirm that holistic education management at SMA Negeri 10 Medan contributes significantly to improving students' adaptability. The findings directly answer the main question in the introduction, namely how education management strategies can encourage students to adapt well in both academic and social environments. This holistic approach has proven effective because it integrates academic, social, emotional, and character aspects simultaneously, providing students with a balanced and meaningful learning experience. In addition, the implementation of this

strategy creates a supportive school environment, enabling students to learn from interactions with teachers, peers, and the community, which overall strengthens their adaptive capacity.

The integration of a holistic curriculum that synergistically combines cognitive, social, and emotional aspects has been proven to strengthen students' resilience in facing academic pressure and social challenges. These findings are in line with the study by Huang et al., which states that holistic education based on curriculum integration improves students' critical thinking and resilience (Bernardo, 2023; Zou, Yao, Zhang, & Huang, 2024). In addition, Rudiana, through the Triangle of Education framework, emphasized that the integration of academics, spirituality, and entrepreneurship strengthens students' ability to adapt in a dynamic environment (Rudiana, 2023). This is in line with today's educational approach, which not only focuses on academic content but also fosters emotional balance and adaptive interpersonal skills. A systematic analysis and meta-analysis by Blewitt et al. shows that curriculum-based interventions that universally integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can improve students' social skills, emotional control, and adaptive competencies in early childhood education (Blewitt et al., 2018). Furthermore, an article by Frode Restad and Christina Elde Mølstad in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* highlights the importance of curriculum reform that explicitly includes social-emotional competencies. While noting that measuring these competencies remains a challenge, this study emphasizes that aligning holistic education policies and practices is key to building students' resilience and adaptability to change (Restad & Mølstad, 2021).

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a learning approach that stimulates students to actively engage in finding solutions to real-world problems through meaningful projects. This method not only strengthens conceptual understanding, but also trains important 21st-century skills such as problem solving, communication, creativity, and collaboration. According to Stephanie Bell in her article *Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future* published in *The Clearing House*, PjBL is an innovative approach that fosters critical skills through inquiry-based learning, where students initiate questions, conduct research, and create projects based on their findings (Bell, 2010). This approach has been shown to support the collaborative and communication skills essential for success in the modern era. Furthermore, a meta-analysis revealed by Zhang et al. in *Frontiers in Psychology* shows that the implementation of PjBL significantly improves student motivation, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and communication skills, all of which are key components of 21st-century adaptation (Zhang & Ma, 2023).

Collaboration between schools, families, and communities is a key element in creating an educational environment that supports students' holistic development. The School-Family-Community Partnership model developed by Joyce Epstein emphasizes the importance of active involvement from all three parties to improve student learning outcomes. This model identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, home learning, decision-making, and collaboration with the community, all of which are designed to strengthen engagement and support for student achievement. (Epstein, 2018).

Research by Desforges and Abouchaar also confirms that parental involvement in education has a significant positive impact on students' academic achievement and adjustment skills. This study shows that parental support, whether in the form of direct involvement or emotional support, can expand students' learning opportunities and foster the social competencies essential for their adaptation in academic and social environments (Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, 2003).

An inclusive school culture is an important foundation in creating an educational environment that values differences and diversity. Schools that implement the principle of inclusion foster a positive climate where students learn to be tolerant, empathetic, and able to work together with classmates who have different backgrounds, abilities, or needs. Thus, inclusive schools not only facilitate academic achievement but also strengthen social skills that are important for student adaptation in various contexts. Consistent implementation of inclusion can shape students to be more

socially flexible, as they become accustomed to dealing with diversity and solving problems together with a variety of individuals (Ainscow et al, 2003; Haroun, 2010).

In addition, a study by Loreman revealed that inclusive education practices not only improve social interaction among students, but also strengthen psychological well-being, including self-confidence, empathy, and communication skills. This shows that inclusive schools are able to prepare students to be more adaptive in facing diverse social dynamics (Loreman, T., Deppeler, J., & Harvey, 2014).

In general, the results of this study are consistent with previous studies, but also provide a new perspective by emphasizing the direct connection between holistic curricula, innovative learning strategies, multi-party collaboration, and inclusive culture. While previous studies tended to highlight single factors, this study confirms that the simultaneous combination of these factors shapes students' adaptive abilities.

For further research, it is important to conduct longitudinal studies to assess the sustainability of the impact of holistic education on student adaptation in the long term. In addition, further development of quantitative instruments will strengthen the validity of the findings and enable comparisons across different schools and regions.

4. CONCLUSION

This case study indicates that holistic education management at SMA Negeri 10 Medan strengthens students' adaptability through the combined effect of a holistic curriculum, project-based learning, collaboration with families and communities, and an inclusive school culture. The findings suggest that adaptability is not the result of a single intervention, but rather emerges from the integration of curriculum, pedagogy, collaboration, and culture within one coherent educational ecosystem. This integrated perspective offers a new contribution to the literature, which has generally examined these elements in isolation. At the same time, the study highlights constraints in the form of limited teacher competence, resistance to cultural change within schools, and inadequate policy support. These challenges emphasize that holistic education management requires systemic reinforcement in order to be sustained and effectively scaled.

The implications of this study point to the need for policies that integrate curriculum reform, teacher professional development, and inclusive school practices in a more unified way. For practitioners, the findings suggest that project-based learning, collaboration with families and communities, and the cultivation of an inclusive culture should not be treated as fragmented innovations but as interconnected strategies that work best when implemented together. From a research perspective, there is a need for longitudinal and multi-site studies to assess both the sustainability and transferability of holistic education management across different school contexts. By underscoring the importance of integration, this study contributes practical insights and theoretical enrichment to ongoing discussions on how holistic education can be more effectively implemented to prepare students for the demands of globalisation and digitalisation.

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