

Inclusive Education: Empowering The Dignity of Children With Disabilities

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ABSTRAK

Anak berkebutuhan khusus hadir di tengah masyarakat. Perbedaan kondisi dan kemampuan merupakan bukti kebesaran Tuhan sebagai Pemberi bentuk dan Pencipta seluruh makhluk di muka bumi. Sebagai makhluk Tuhan yang sempurna, anak berkebutuhan khusus terlahir dengan anugerah pribadi yang tersembunyi. Pendidikan inklusif merupakan perwujudan tujuan untuk meningkatkan harkat dan martabat mereka dalam hidup di dunia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dampak pendidikan inklusif bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus di Sekolah Dasar. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, angket, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan statistik deskriptif kualitatif dan nonparametrik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan inklusif efektif mengurangi permasalahan belajar anak berkebutuhan khusus dan meningkatkan prestasi belajar mereka. Dengan demikian, pendidikan inklusif menjadi berkah bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus untuk meraih harkat dan martabat di dunia.

Kata kunci: anak berkebutuhan khusus, sekolah dasar, pendidikan inklusif

ABSTRACT

Children with disabilities exist in the community. Condition and ability differences are the evidence of God's might as the Bestower of forms and the Creator of all creatures on Earth. As God's perfect creature, children with special needs are born with a secret individual endowment. Inclusive education embodies the purpose of promoting their dignity of living in the world. This research aims to investigate the impacts of inclusive education for children with special needs in Primary Schools. The research data were gathered through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The data were analysed by using descriptive qualitative and non-parametric statistics. The research results show that inclusive education effectively lessens the learning problems of children with special needs and improves their learning achievement. Thus, inclusive education becomes a blessing for children with special needs to gain dignity.

Keywords: children with disabilities, inclusive education, primary school



INTRODUCTION

Children with disabilities are present in our community. These children have abilities that are different from other children in general. They may have problems with visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation, paralysis, maladaptation, autism, learning difficulties, and even those with giftedness and talent. Children with special needs have the same rights as other children; they have the right to live and develop their abilities by their characteristics, hindrances, and needs. Those differences are born as the secret embodiment of children with special needs. It is their fundamental human right to live in the world, and parents and the community are responsible for protecting and developing the children along with the potential hidden in each individual. Parents, as well as the community, are, in nature, created and given the power to finally accept whatever existing condition of such children as human beings.

The birth of a child with special needs generally brings crises for his/her family (Arini et al., 2019; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban; 2016). Those crises are known as "symbolical death", as every expecting mother has future ideals and wishes for her child and her family. The birth of a special-need baby stresses the parents and makes them lose their hopeful wishes for the future. Other crises are connected to the parents' difficulties in caring for and educating their children (Gunarhadi, 2003). The birth of a special-need baby also raises various reactions from his/her surrounding community. Some refuse, and others accept and understand Allah's will as the Creator. Community members can indeed feel compassion, pity, and sadness. Some can also feel angry or even want to kill the baby. The development of the parent's and community's reactions, attitudes, and behaviour toward the special needs baby can be grouped into four (Martika et al., 2016). The first is to terminate, which means that the family and community kill the special-need baby straight away. The reason is that they thought the birth could bring disaster, disgrace the family, or lower the family's dignity. The second is to leave him/her be, which means that the community lets the child be; they do not kill the baby but let him/her live his/her life as it is. The third is to protect, which means special needs are sheltered. He/she is protected and cared for. The fourth is to educate, which means that the child is allowed to get an education to develop and actualise his/her potential following the child's ability.

The right to access decent education belongs to every child in any situation, including those with special needs. It follows the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 31 Paragraph 1, "Every citizen has the right to education", and Paragraph 2, that "The government shall establish and conduct a national educational system which shall be regulated by law". Children with special needs have the same standing, rights, and responsibilities as normal children to realise their welfare (Solihat et al., 2018). Educating children with special needs means realising the purpose of promoting human self-esteem. Through education, it is hoped that children with special needs will recover their dignity, indicated by the following characteristics: free of tyranny, unbound from bullying, and independent and self-reliant. Education is believed to help children develop their dignity regarding self-realisation, human relationships, self-reliance, and civic responsibility (Elton-Chalcraft et al, 2016).

Special education is education for learners who have difficulties in following the regular learning process. It can be due to having either physical, emotional, mental, or social differences and/or gifted with special intelligence and special talent (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, 2010). Special Education in Indonesia is conducted in Special Schools or Primary Schools for Children with Special Needs. Also, Special Education can be carried out in regular schools that are called inclusive schools, such as in Primary Schools/Islamic Primary Schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah),

Secondary School/Islamic Secondary Schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), High school/Vocational High School/Islamic High School (Madrasah Aliyah).

Government Regulation Number 70/2009 regarding Inclusive Education explains that inclusion is a matter of tolerance, respect, and equality and is all about dignity in social life. Henceforth, inclusive education means giving all learners with special needs and those gifted with special intelligence and/or special talents an equal opportunity to participate in an inclusive community's peaceful life. Referring to that limitation, an inclusive school is an education unit providing an education service system for children with special needs and children in general (Ajuwon, 2008). Other experts define an inclusive school as a school in which every child can be accepted and become part of the class, helping each other with his/her teacher and peers as well as with other community members to fulfil his/her individual needs. An inclusive school is also intended to become one that accepts, respects, and shares empathy among the students in the same class. That school provides a decent education program that is challenging enough but is still in the sphere of each student's ability and needs (Khakim et al., 2018). Thus, based on various definitions and explanations on the inclusive school concept, conclusions are drawn that (Charema, 2010):

- a. inclusive education is an open education for all children in terms of academic and social atmosphere;
- b. inclusive education is an education system alternative that is created to take care of children with special needs and/or other marginalised children;
- c. inclusive education is an education that provides an education system which accommodates all children's needs;
- d. inclusive education is a continuous process as a way to achieve the goal instead of the end of a process;
- e. inclusive education is provided to expand education access as well as to enhance the quality of education; and
- f. inclusive education is a paradigm in a regular education system that emphasises the paramount importance of dignity.

In academic terms, inclusive education has to make various modifications and provide various programs to accommodate the different students' needs from the perspective of social life. The problem of this research is the effectiveness of inclusive education in primary schools, given (1) inclusive education continuity, (2) learning problem reduction, and (3) enhancement of learning achievement of children with special needs.

METHOD

This research belonged to development research. It used the observational research method to identify children with special needs. The activity of this research was in the form of socialization of inclusive education concept for the teachers and principals of Primary Schools where the research took place. The materials for the socialization included inclusive education concept, concept of children with special needs, identification and assessment, curriculum adaptation, teaching/learning adaptation, and assessment adaptation. Subsequent activity was in the form of implementation of inclusive education to investigate the effectiveness of inclusive education for children with special needs in primary school.

The research locations were 7 (seven) Primary Schools in Boyolali Regency. The research was executed in one semester. The data of the research were gathered through observation, interviews, questionnaires, tests, and documentation. The interview method was used to gather the case conference activity data. The questionnaire method was used to gather data on the teachers' comprehension of varied learning, individual learning using varied assessments, learner cooperation, and

learning motivation. The test method was used to gather the learning achievement data, and the documentation method was implemented to get the data on children with special needs, teachers, and learning report documents. The data were analysed by using descriptive qualitative analysis and non-parametric statistics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The impact of inclusive education is established through several indicators: (1) inclusive education sustainability, (2) learning problem reduction, and (3) enhancement of learning achievement.

1. Inclusive education sustainability

Indicators used to investigate the inclusive education continuity include (a) attendance of children with special needs to Primary School, (b) enhancement of teachers' comprehension of individual learning, (c) enhancement of teachers' understanding of varied learning, (d) availability of special-need teachers in Primary School, and (e) implementation of varied assessment.

a. Attendance of children with special needs to Primary School

The research reveals that in 7 Primary Schools, there are 99 children with special needs with the following criteria: unable to see (2 children), hearing impaired (2 children), slow learning (35 children), paralysed (1 child), emotionally/socially impaired (5 children), gifted (10 children), and learning difficulty (44 children). The results of this research comply with the results of Heung's research (2008), in which in each school, the most common forms of children with special needs are those with learning difficulties and those with slow learning. Slow learner children have an intelligence quotient of 70-85 or 70-89. Only three children have slight physical differences found in those schools. Meanwhile, 44 children with learning difficulties are found in these schools. They are characterised by normal intelligence with minimum basic psychological and neurological function disturbance (Parwoto, 2007).

b. Enhancement of teachers' comprehension of individual learning

The data analysis demonstrates that teachers' comprehension of individual learning programs includes the following: (a). very good (71.43%), (b). good (18.36%), (c). not so good/poor (8.16%), and (d). not good/very poor (2.05%). The result of non-parametric statistic analysis shows that teachers' comprehension before and following the training are significantly different ($Z = -1.252$; $P = .0481$).

This finding shows that 89.79% of teachers have good and very good understanding. 10.21% of teachers get not-so-good/poor and not-good/very poor understanding marks. Similar research has been executed by Istiqomah in which the teachers' competence increases after the training, although the training materials cover slightly different areas, namely teachers' competence in teaching/learning of the children with learning difficulties caused by lack of nutrients using individual and group approaches. The research result also conforms training to enhance teachers' teaching competence to teach children who are unable to see (blind children) using a humanistic-individual approach, and teachers' competencies also increased after it (Arini et al., 2019).

c. Enhancement of teachers' understanding on varied learning

Varied learning mentioned here is learning activities that implement various teaching methods using teaching aids. The teaching activities are varied among classical, group, and individual. The result of data analysis shows teachers' comprehension level of varied learning includes the following: (a). very

good (65.30%), (b). good (20.04%), (c). not so good/poor (12.24%), (d). not good/very poor (2.05%). The average post-test result is $>$ (37.233), which is better than the pretest result (22.034). The statistic analysis result shows that the teachers' comprehension is significantly different ($Z = -4.33$; $P=1.153E-02$).

This is in agreement with the research results of , who investigate teachers' competence differences in the teaching of mentally challenged special needs children or children with special needs (Gavish et al., 2016; Gaad & Khan, 2007). In that research, the teachers' competence in varied learning is better following the training.

d. Availability of class teacher and Special education teacher in school

Special education teachers are teachers who have special educational backgrounds. Competence-based special education teachers can perform as class teachers in special schools and teachers in regular schools/primary schools. They are also competent in identifying and assessing children with special needs and developing special programs such as mobility orientation, Braille reading/writing, and sign language. The research found that each researched school already has a Special education teacher. There is even one school that has three Special education teachers. This condition promises to eliminate the learning problems of children with special needs. In the inclusive education concept, the special education teacher helps the class teacher plan, implement, and assess the learning achievements of the students with special needs in the inclusive class (Koga & Hall, 2007). The learning activities for children with special needs can also be carried out in special classes. This special class member can comprise one or more, depending on the variety of the learning problems (Charema, 2010). The class can be handled by one teacher or more.

e. Implementation of varied assessment

The varied assessment technique mentioned here is an assessment activity adapted to special needs children's characteristics. Children who cannot see will be assessed in ways that do not involve the function of sight. Hearing-impaired children are assessed without using a hearing function, and so on. Moreover, varied assessment techniques also include using varied evaluation techniques adjusted to the characteristics of each child with special needs (Mirasandi et al., 2019).

The result shows that every inclusive Primary School being researched has already implemented varied assessment techniques for children with special needs. Some of the evaluation techniques that were used are (a) written test, (b) observation, (c) oral test, (d) performance assessment, (e) portfolio assessment, and (g) behaviour assessment. The evaluation materials are not always the same, depending on individual learning progress, including those of children with special needs.

2. Learning problem reduction

The indicators used to determine whether there is a learning problem reduction in children with special needs are willingness to cooperate in studying and learning motivation of children with special needs.

a. Cooperative attitude between children with special needs and normal children

The data analysis result expounds that the average score of the cooperative attitude between children with special needs and normal children after inclusive

education is higher (65.7333) than before the implementation (39.0667). The result of the differentiability test of the scores before and following the inclusive education implementation between children with special needs and other normal children are significantly different ($Z=-5.666$; $P = 1.533E-04$).

The cooperative attitudes between children with special needs and typical children and among the children with special needs are very important in achieving learning progress (Mirasandi et al., 2019). The cooperative attitudes researched are those in the learning process, not those in doing the test. The existence of students with special needs is probably being isolated in inclusive schools where the students have no socialisation on the presence of students with special needs and the importance of students' cooperation. This problem is the general factor that causes the secondary problem for children with special needs, namely, social psychological problems (Gavish et al., 2016).

The result is very gratifying, and it conforms to the goal of inclusive education development, namely establishing collaboration between learners, regardless of whether they are special needs or normal regular students. This research result corresponds with Ding et al. (2006) research, which shows that inclusive education can improve friendliness and cooperation among all learners with various characteristics and special needs types. In other words, inclusive education can assuage the problems of children with special needs, especially in terms of willingness to cooperate with other children who do not have special needs in primary school.

b. Learning motivation of children with special needs

The research result corroborates the fact that the average score of the learning motivation is higher than the previous test before inclusive education implementation ($75.2667 > 46.60$). The result of the differentiability test on the average scores on the learning motivation of the students with special needs before and after the inclusive education implementation is significantly different ($Z = -5.459$; $P = 4.111E-03$).

Learning motivation is the predisposing factor of learning success. Strong learning motivation will likely result in high achievement; conversely, weak learning motivation can also lead to low learning success (Arini et al., 2019). Children with special needs, whether they are unable to see, hearing impaired, paralysed, or others, generally have low learning motivation. Gifted children can be underachievers since their learning motivations are low (Solihat et al., 2018). This result shows that inclusive education can lessen problems experienced by children with special needs, especially in increasing their learning motivation. The result corresponds with the research result of Kantavong (2010), which is related to the learning motivation of children with special needs.

3. Learning achievement increase of children with special needs

The increase in learning achievement for children with special needs is one indicator of the effectiveness of the inclusive education model. The research discovers that:

- a. After inclusive education implementation, the classroom teachers, as a rule, state that the daily learning achievement of children with special needs is quite good;
- b. According to the classroom teachers, varied assessment is very suitable for children with special needs since the assessment encompasses cognitive, affective, and motor skill aspects;
- c. All schools where the research took place construct two versions of the learning achievement report; the score in the form of number and description of sub-competence/competence achievements;

- d. The average learning end achievement is better than the one prior to the inclusive education implementation ($72 > 57$), and
- e. The differentiability test result of the average score of the learning achievement of children with special needs following the inclusive education implementation is significantly different from the average score afterwards ($Z = .500$; $P = .252$).

Children with special needs are like a normal curve, in which most of the population (68.26%) has normal intelligence, a small number (15.73%) has subnormal intelligence, and about 15.73% has supernormal intelligence (Mirasandi et al., 2019). Those with normal and supernormal intelligence can take part in academic education. That is the reason why the result of this research shows that provided they are given varied learning that is suitable for the individual characteristics of each of the children with special needs, they can improve their learning achievement. This saying means that every person has the right to get an education, notwithstanding his/her race, ethnic group, religion, physical/ psychological condition, and economic standing. When the teacher is wisely able to face his/her students and does not discriminate against a student - because of his/her different physical condition, for example, all students' learning achievements can increase, including those of students with special needs.

This research conforms to Okumbe's (2010) research that most children with special needs in regular primary schools are those with learning difficulties and those having learning difficulties and that with inclusive education, their learning achievement can be enhanced. Education for children with special needs helps them actualise their potency and achieve something. It helps them to be worthy, freeing them from tyranny and giving them a bright and hopeful future. Thus, inclusive education implementation becomes a blessing for the dignity of children with special needs.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that in terms of academic sense: (a) inclusive education can be implemented in Primary Schools, (b) inclusive education is effective in decreasing learning problems, and (c) inclusive education can enhance the learning achievement of children with special needs. The implementation, however, of inclusive education helps students with special needs to actualize their potential and accommodate their dignity accordingly. It helps them to be worthy, freeing them from tyranny, liberating them from bullying, and giving them a bright and delightful future of meaningful life. It also improves their quality of life, gaining happiness and salvation in this world and beyond. Hence, inclusive education is a blessing for the dignity of students with special needs. Thus, it is recommended that inclusive primary schools should be provided with both academic and social programs so that how students can develop their individuals holistically.

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