



## IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

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### **Abstract:**

Inclusive education aims to provide equal access to education for all students, including those with special needs, in a friendly and supportive learning environment. This study was conducted at SDS Ulul Albab, Jember Regency, with the aim of analyzing opportunities and barriers in the implementation of inclusive education in one particular local context. The research approach used was qualitative with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from schools that implement the inclusive education model. The results of the study indicate that the main opportunities in the implementation of inclusive education include government policy support, teacher commitment, and community participation. However, significant obstacles were also found, such as the lack of facilities that support the needs of students with special needs, limited teacher competence, and the existence of social stigma against inclusive students. This study concludes that the implementation of inclusive education requires a collaborative approach between the government, schools, and the community to overcome obstacles and maximize opportunities. These findings provide practical recommendations for stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of inclusive education at the local level.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Opportunities, Barriers, Local Context*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Humans need the development of the potential for survival that can be obtained through education with science, insight and mastery of various skills. As the state of Indonesia has also mandated the human right to education in the 1945 Constitution Article 31 paragraph 1 which approximately reads: “every citizen has the right to education”. The right to education becomes better and can be felt the benefits when accompanied by quality education. Quality education can be seen from aspects related directly or indirectly to things that support the implementation of an educational process.”

Quality education is also mandated in Law No. 20 of 2003 Article 5 Paragraph (1) on the National Education System which states that: “every citizen has the same right to obtain quality education”. Quality education for all citizens is also outlined in Article 11 paragraph (1) of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System which reads: “the government and local governments are obliged to provide services and facilities, and ensure the implementation of

quality education for every citizen without discrimination”.

The article is also one form of support for the International Education Policy for all (EFA) pioneered by UNESCO to establish education for all. "Education for all ... care must be taken of the needs of the poor and most disadvantaged, including children of workers, remote rural residents and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, adolescents and adults affected by conflict, HIV / AIDS, hunger and ill health; and those with special learning needs..."(UNESCO, 2000 in Hasan et al, 2018).

Education for all pioneered by UNESCO means education for all people regardless of differences in various backgrounds, including including education for children with special needs or ABK. Often children with special needs are educated in special schools (SLB) but sometimes children with special needs who attend SLB are even excluded from society because of labeling factors. Therefore, of course children with special needs are entitled to education to be able to develop their potential through public schools along with other normal children. In this case, children with special needs are contained in Law No. 20 of 2003 Article 5 Paragraph (2), namely : “citizens who have physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and/ or social disorders and citizens who have the potential for intelligence and special talents that require special education.” Special education is a special education for children who attend public institutions. Public schools are often chosen because of the distance that is easily accessible so that many parents who have children with disabilities flock to public schools. Therefore, the government issued regulation of the Minister of National Education of Indonesia No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education, which provides opportunities for children with disabilities to attend public schools (Dani Utari, 2020). As an effort to follow up on these regulations and in order to support the implementation of inclusive education, then with the East Java Governor Regulation Number 30 of 2018 concerning the implementation of inclusive education in East Java Province, all children with special needs (ABK) in Jember city get the same access to education as other normal children.

This is evident in schools that carry out inclusive education, namely in SDS Islam Ulul Albab. SDS Islam Ulul Albab is one of the private elementary schools located in the District. Kaliwates, Kab. Jember, East Java. SDS Islam Ulul Albab was established on May 17, 2019 with Decree number 503/A.1 / SD-B/002/35.09.325/2019 which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and culture. In learning activities, the school, which has 143 students, is guided by 12 teachers who are professionals in their fields. The current principal of SDS Islam Ulul Albab is Siti Maisaroh (Admin, 2024). According to observations, SDS Islam provides access to inclusive education because all children are entitled to education, including children with special needs. This is evident because SDS Islam Ulul Albab has 4 ABK learners who certainly have their own limitations.

Based on observations in some schools that provide inclusive education there are some shortcomings as well as the lack of supporting facilities. This can be caused by several factors such as the lack of costs resulting in limited facilities and infrastructure and lack of funding or budget to meet accessible facilities and infrastructure for children with dikap Regarding Participants with physical disabilities. Not only that, there are other challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in regular schools, namely (1) Lack of teacher competence to teach ABK, (2) lack of Teacher Training, (3) lack of complete data on students with special needs, (4) negative views on students with special needs are still a big obstacle in some communities.and parents of regular students often worry that the presence of inclusive students can interfere with their child's learning process, as well as (5) curricula that have not been oriented to be prepared for

inclusive school programs.

It also occurs in the application of inclusive education in SDS Islam Ulul Albab Jember, in its application would require educators to be able to launch the implementation of inclusive education but in reality even though there are special educators of inclusive education but there are no teachers who do have the basic to be able to teach and educate children with special needs (ABK), plus there is no training for inclusive teachers, as well as the various needs needed by children with special needs there. So this can certainly be a problem that requires effort so that this problem can be resolved.

In line with research conducted by Abdul Hakim Hidayat et al, in 2024 with the title “problems of implementing inclusive education in elementary schools.” who stated that :” there are still many challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools, including the lack of teacher competence, the lack of supporting facilities, the lack of an adapted curriculum, as well as the various characteristics of ABK that require different approaches (Abdul Hakim Hidayat, 2024).”

The research conducted by Husnul Mukti,et al in 2023 with the title “analysis of Inclusive Education : constraints and solutions in its implementation.”in his research stated that:” constraints in inclusive education include inadequate special guidance teachers, lack of competence of regular teachers, false perceptions about children with special needs, curriculum that has not been adjusted, as well as the lack of friendly facilities and infrastructure with solutions to improve guidance teachers, training for regular teachers, socialization of children with special needs, curriculum adaptation, and improved facilities. In essence, Inclusive Education requires improving teacher guidance, teacher competence, appropriate perception, curriculum adaptation, and friendly facilities,as well as the implementation of appropriate learning models (Husnul Mukti, et al : 2023).”

Inclusive education is a philosophy of education as well as a policy in the field of Education. Inclusive education means that all children, regardless of their ability or disability, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, cultural background or language and religion are united in the same school community (Directorate of Primary Education PPK LK, 2011). In this inclusive education, children with special needs can learn together with normal children, so it is hoped that it will be more effective to help them achieve their developmental tasks. When ABK interacts with normal children, he is expected to get more stimulus and increase more positive social and emotional functions so that he has a better chance of being accepted by peers, has better self-perception, and has fewer problem behaviors than if he attended an external School (Baroroh, 2022). This is based on the fact that in the community there are normal and different children who cannot be separated from a community (Munawwaroh, 2018). However, there is a non-conformist approach in the local context in the application of inclusive education which refers to situations where the policies, methods, or strategies of Inclusive Education adopted are not fully relevant, suitable, or in accordance with the unique conditions, cultures, needs, and challenges in a region or community. This can happen because the approach used often adopts a global or national model without considering local factors in depth. Therefore, of course, this can be a factor that is sometimes not in line with the principle of inclusion, making it difficult for people to accept.

Effective inclusive education involves incorporating children with special needs and normal children in learning. This learning requires adjustments in teaching materials, methods, media, funds, classroom management, and learning environment. Teachers face challenges in implementing learning if the

curriculum is not adapted. In addition, learning must also adjust to the ability, learning speed, difficulty, and interests of students. Children with special needs are not forced to achieve competencies that are beyond their capabilities. They also don't have to wait for other, slower students. Students who experience failure in one learning method or technique will not necessarily experience failure in another different method or technique.(Fitri, 2022).

Curriculum adaptation is intended so that students with special needs can be served well according to the characteristics and needs of each student. From the adaptation of the curriculum will produce an individual learning program. Learning management is carried out collaboratively between subject teachers, GPK, BK teachers, and homerooms to obtain optimal learning conditions (Ningrum, 2019). There must be cooperation from various parties for the creation of education that can accommodate the needs of children with special needs (ABK). The distribution of tasks and cooperation between core teachers and accompanying teachers in inclusion classes make students feel comfortable and confident participating in the learning process (Budiarti, 2018). There are five models of adaptive curriculum development for children with special needs, including escalation model, duplication model, modification model, substitution model, and omission model (Directorate of PPK LK Basic Education, 2011). There are four curriculum models that can be used in inclusive education, namely the escalation model, duplication model, modification model, and substitution model. The escalation Model is used for students who have above-average intelligence or special talents.

The duplication Model refers to the use of the same national standard curriculum for students with special needs as for regular students. The modified Model involves developing a curriculum that is appropriate to the abilities and needs of students with special needs. The substitution Model involves replacing national standard curriculum materials with other materials that are more suitable for students with special needs who cannot follow national standard materials. (Department of Education, 2011). Of the curriculum development models, the modified model is the most commonly used inclusion school (Prajalani, 2021). However, in many studies it has been found that there are still many schools that have not used a curriculum that has been adapted to children with special needs (Pardede, 2020; Savitri, 2020; Sunardi, 2011; Tejena, 2022) because teachers still find it difficult to modify the curriculum and learning (Novtasari, 2022). As a result, children with Special Needs find it difficult to follow learning in inclusive schools.

Based on the results of the field and previous research can be drawn a common thread that the implementation of inclusive education still has many problems ranging from adaptation to the curriculum, the characteristics of ABK learners, teacher competence, and inadequate facilities. Therefore, there is a need for reconstruction related to increasing the competence of inclusive education teachers, curricula, and adequate infrastructure to support the success of inclusive education. The implementation of inclusive education is at the intersection of opportunities and barriers. Great opportunities lie in policy support, teacher morale, and the potential for community participation. However, significant barriers, especially related to facilities, competence of educators, social stigma, and curriculum limitations, are challenges that require serious attention

Based on the description that has been presented above, the researcher is interested in researching the “implementation of Inclusive Education: A Study of opportunities and barriers in the local context.” The theoretical benefit of this research is that it is hoped that this research will be a complement or a reference

for other research. Empirical benefits of this study is that researchers can add insight related to policy evaluation that occurs in the object of research that researchers choose.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses qualitative approach with case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon of inclusive education in the local context in depth and holistically. This approach also allows researchers to explore the experiences and perspectives of various parties involved in the implementation of inclusive education (Creswell, 2014). The study was conducted at SDS Ulul Albab Jember which has implemented inclusive education. This location was chosen because it is representative in the context of inclusive education in the area. The subjects of the study included: principals, teachers, students with special needs (ABK) and regular students, to understand their experiences. Parents of students, other parties, such as education supervisors or inclusive education support communities. To obtain comprehensive data, several data collection techniques were used: interviews, participatory observation and documentation. Data analysis was carried out in stages, using thematic analysis methods for qualitative data, namely (1) data collection: Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were organized and arranged by relevant categories. (2) Open Coding: each piece of data is coded to identify a major theme, such as "policy support", "teacher competence", "educational facilities", "social barriers", and others. (3) Axial Coding: the codes found in the open coding stage are grouped and analyzed to see the relationship between various themes and categories. (4) data triangulation: Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation are compared and re-examined to ensure consistency and validity of findings. (5) interpretation and Conclusion: the findings obtained are analyzed in the context of inclusive education theory and Indonesian education policy perspective, and then compiled into relevant conclusions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In everyday life in society, the term extraordinary children who are now referred to as children with special needs is still misinterpreted, namely extraordinary children are always interpreted as children with superior abilities or outstanding achievements (Puspita & Sri Hartini, 2015). In fact, the definition of extraordinary children also refers to the understanding that children who experience abnormalities or ketunaan, either in one type of disorder or more than one type of disorder disorder (Munthe et al., 2021). No different from normal people, children who have a habit also have the same needs as normal people. Such as physical/health needs, socio-emotional needs and educational needs (Wardani, 2017). But often in the field we find that children with special needs have been commonplace in special schools (SLB), whereas children with special needs are entitled to education to develop their potential through public schools along with other normal children, as well as to do justice to education between children with special needs and other normal children, so that children with special needs can socialize and be accepted by the environment.

Regarding this matter, of course SDS Islam Ulul Albab pays attention to some of the needs for the implementation of this climatic education in institutions. Some considerations that are considered are that with inclusive education, schools can provide opportunities for children with special needs to learn and socialize with peers and can increase self-confidence and independence. Not only that, seeing from the field conditions that seem to be the

social level of regular students is declining, with the inclusion of students is certainly students can learn to understand and appreciate the diversity between friends. And with the implementation of inclusive education, it can form an inclusive culture and respect diversity, because basically inclusive education in primary schools reflects a commitment to fair and equal education, providing opportunities for all children to develop according to their potential in a supportive environment.

Based on the results of an interview with one of the teachers at SDS Ulul Albab Jember which states that the number of educators is quite a lot and there are inclusive teachers who are competent in their fields, this indicates that there is a spirit and readiness of institutions to implement inclusive education, sometimes there is also special training for inclusive teachers in order to support teacher competence. Facilities and infrastructure for Inclusive Education at SDS Ulul Albab have also been provided, this is evidenced by the inclusion of classes used by ABK children at certain times.

In the application of inclusive education in SDS Ulul Albab, of course, there are obstacles in its application, this can be caused by (1) limited resources, it is said that because the inclusion teacher in SDS Ulul Albab is 3 people while the number of ABK students is 4 students so that these limited resources will affect the passage of inclusive education. (2) Lack of teacher competence, in fact not all teachers have the appropriate competence for inclusive education because there are still new inclusion teachers who enter and are not in accordance with their fields so that they are sometimes overwhelmed when taking care of ABK students. (3) the inability of the education system to facilitate ABK to the maximum, indeed in SDS Ulul Albab has provided special classes for inclusive education but in it there is still no complete infrastructure to support ABK students, especially those with physical limitations.

To overcome obstacles and maximize opportunities in the local context, the strategies that can be carried out by SDS Ulul Albab are (1) conducting special training and development on inclusive education so that educators are ready to face children with special needs, The assumption that teachers' knowledge and skills are associated with their attitudes is supported by empirical findings that show positive relations between teachers' training attendance and their experiences with inclusive education and their attitudes (de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert 2011; Ruberg and Porsch 2017). The relevance of teachers' knowledge is also indicated by intervention studies that revealed positive effects of in-service teacher training (Sari 2007) and information through a weekly newsletter (Kim, Park, and Snell 2006) on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Martínez (2003) interviewed mainstream student teachers and found an increase in knowledge, positive attitudes, and confidence after a 15-week course in special education. In sum, student teachers should be prepared for teaching in inclusive classes by providing them with knowledge about how to design teaching and supporting the development of positive attitudes towards inclusion, especially towards students with EBD. Since the implementation of inclusion requires different expertise, co-teaching in higher education might be an innovative approach to attain this competence in student teachers (Cedric Steinert & Susanne Jurkowski, 2024). (2) involving communities and parents in the learning process so that inclusive education runs smoothly, this is in line with Strnadová et al.'s (2016) Their study of parents and teachers found that open communication and support during times of transitions lead to beneficial outcomes for students with ASD and/or intellectual disability. The teacher participants further acknowledged that a 'lack of time and poor communication' were some of the difficulties with collaboration between primary school teachers and secondary school teachers during times

of transition (Strnadová, Cumming, and Danker 2016, 149). A key finding from the research acknowledged that involving students, and empowering parents to take an active role during transitional stages was necessary to best support students with disability during times of transition (Strnadová, Cumming, and Danker 2016). (3) Partnering with various related institutions, as well as social institutions and inclusive education observers to expand access to needed resources, There are six studies that provide sufficient information for this analysis. A qualitative meta-analysis reported intensive instructional support and increased student collaboration in co-taught classrooms ( Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2007 ). Consistent with these findings, one study found that students with disabilities received more individualized instruction in co-taught classrooms than in classrooms taught solely by a general teacher ( Magiera and Zigmond, 2005 ). However, another study found no difference between co-taught and single-teacher classrooms in student achievement ( Murawski, 2006 ). These findings suggest the importance of the quality of collaboration between team members for the effectiveness of co-teaching ( Jurkowski and Müller 2018 ). In a more recent study, comparing the impact of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms and individualized learning in special education classrooms on the academic achievement of students with learning disabilities, Tremblay found a positive impact of co-teaching on student literacy, but the impact could not be attributed exclusively to the instructional model due to the different settings ( Tremblay, 2013 ). (4) improving school facilities that are friendly to children with special needs (ABK), by improving school facilities, the benefits are (a) supporting the right to inclusive education, facilities that are friendly to ABK ensure that all children, including those with special needs, can access education equally. This is in line with the principles of inclusivity and Human Rights, in accordance with the Convention on the rights of the child and the National Education System Act. (B) increasing the independence of children with disabilities, specially designed facilities, such as access points, classrooms with learning aids, and disability-friendly toilets, help children with disabilities become more independent in their activities in the school environment. (c) support the Optimal learning process, with facilities such as special learning aids, therapy rooms, or professional assistants, ABK can be more focused and comfortable in learning. This allows their potential to develop to the maximum.

Seeing the field conditions regarding the implementation of inclusive education, the government must pay attention to the implications of policies and practices that can be started from strengthening inclusive policies in the field such as providing continuous training to improve teacher competence, improving school facilities so that inclusive education runs smoothly, empowering communities and parents in supporting inclusive education, so as to create a, especially in areas that are still lagging behind, in order to meet the needs of students with various backgrounds.

## **CONCLUSION**

Inclusive education provides opportunities for children with special needs (ABK) to obtain equal educational rights, maximize their potential, and socialize in a supportive environment. However, there are a number of challenges in its implementation, such as limited human resources, lack of teacher competence, and limited adequate facilities. In SDS Islam Ulul Albab, although it has shown enthusiasm in the implementation of inclusive education with the presence of special educators and facilities such as inclusion classes, there are still obstacles that need to be overcome. These barriers include the inadequate number of inclusive teachers, the need for teacher competency training, and the limited

means to support children with various types of special needs.

To optimize inclusive education, some strategies that can be implemented are continuous training for teachers, community and parent involvement, partnerships with related institutions, and improving school facilities. With these measures, inclusive education will not only benefit ABKS in supporting their independence, learning process, and educational rights, but will also create an environment that values diversity and inclusiveness in schools. The government also has an important role in supporting inclusive education through policies that strengthen the competence of educators, improving facilities, empowering communities, and adequate funding. With a shared commitment, inclusive education can run optimally and realize educational justice for all children

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