

Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Inclusive Curriculum in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the challenges and strategies in implementing an inclusive curriculum at Elementary School II Dasin. The methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and document analysis. The subjects consist of ten teachers who have been involved in the implementation of the inclusive curriculum over the past two years. The findings indicate several challenges in implementing the curriculum. First, there is a lack of competent human resources, low involvement of parents and the community, and limited support from the school. The study also identifies strategies to effectively address these challenges, such as educator training, the establishment of an inclusion committee at the school, and increasing parental and community participation in the implementation of the inclusive curriculum.

Keywords: *inclusive curriculum; challenges; strategy*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of inclusive education is education for all.¹ The inclusive education policy in Indonesia has been implemented for more than a decade and has received recognition and support from various parties, especially education practitioners. The legal basis for the implementation of inclusive education that regulates education for students with special needs or potential special talents is regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009. District/City Governments are required to establish at least one elementary school and one secondary school in each sub-district to organize inclusive education. The purpose of the policy is to provide a fair opportunity for every student to receive quality education, according to individual needs and abilities, without discrimination.² The success of inclusive education policies in various regions still varies and faces various challenges. Many schools have difficulty implementing it because they have to meet various requirements, such as the availability of resources, teacher training, and adequate infrastructure support. These challenges hinder the optimal implementation of inclusive education.

Inclusive education for Children with Special Needs (CSN) has become an important focus in the education system to ensure that every individual has equal access to quality education. Inclusive schools play a very important role in providing adequate education services for students with special needs, ensuring that they receive the necessary support in the learning process. The principle of inclusive education is the integration of two education systems, namely regular education and special education into the school system.³

The number of CSN in Indonesia continues to increase every year. The United Nations estimates that around 10% of school-age children are disabled. Based on data from the Directorate of Elementary Schools, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, the number of Educational Units Providing Inclusive Education has reached 17,134 at the Elementary School level.⁴ The role of the teacher is an integral part of implementing learning in the classroom.⁵ Teachers in inclusive schools face unique challenges that differ from teachers who teach students without

disabilities. Inclusive educators must understand the curriculum and create learning programs that are tailored to the needs of students with disabilities. Teachers also need to recognize the characteristics of students with disabilities, including their strengths and weaknesses, and adapt learning materials to the needs and abilities of students with disabilities. In addition, teachers need support from the government to help them carry out this role effectively.

Recognizing the importance of inclusion, the implementation of inclusive curriculum in related educational institutions is a major concern for the education system by adapting to the individual needs of students.⁶ This is also what researchers found when conducting observations at Dasin II Elementary School. The school has implemented an inclusive curriculum for the past two years, but over time, obstacles have emerged that are felt by teachers.

The implementation of inclusive curriculum in elementary schools faces several challenges that need to be addressed. Inclusive classroom teachers need to have knowledge of the curriculum and lesson plans that are tailored to the needs of the children. Teachers must understand the characteristics of children with special needs and provide individualized teaching using the Individual Implementation Program designed by the Special Guidance Teacher (SGT). The SGT is tasked with teaching inclusive students and preparing the Individual Education Program (IEP), which includes preliminary, core, and closing activities. The SGT must carry out these activities sequentially in accordance with the established guidelines.⁷

Based on this background, the author considers it important to conduct an in-depth study of the challenges and strategies of teachers in implementing an inclusive curriculum at Dasin II State Elementary School which is connected to the recently introduced Merdeka curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The curriculum, as one of the main elements in education, has an important role in determining the direction and objectives of learning. It still faces obstacles in its implementation, especially in the application of the curriculum in schools that provide inclusive education, which have special characteristics for inclusive classes. Zais⁸ mention “curriculum as a blueprint for education consist ultimately of experiences that it planned for learner to have.” Curriculum as an educational guide that includes direction and goals, can be understood both in the context of national education and individual education. The curriculum contains a design of learning experiences that are planned so that students can feel it.

The curriculum used in inclusive classes basically refers to the general school curriculum, but for Students with Special Needs (SSN) the curriculum needs to be adjusted and modified according to the abilities of the SSN. Inclusive classes are characterized by a high level of diversity, so the principle of curriculum flexibility is very important. The curriculum in schools that implement inclusive education must be adaptive or flexible in order to meet the needs of SSN. Adaptation and modification of the curriculum in education is the key to supporting the diversity and special needs of each student. Valentin⁹ state “adaption are things used to help a student better engage in her or his environment and surroundings, while modification are changes made to enhance the curriculum both are used to help the student process information and learn.”

The curriculum design for students with special needs must take into account the needs and character of the individual by developing a program, namely IEP, which can accommodate special needs.¹⁰ Inclusive education in its implementation often faces challenges, and one of the obstacles is the existence of inadequate policies, procedures, and structures. According to Bourke, the inadequacy of policy and procedural support hampers the development of inclusive education, and results in its implementation being less focused, and causing frustration for teachers and practitioners. Rose et al¹¹ stated that one of the obstacles in the curriculum is the implementation of IEP which can experience inconsistency in its development and use if it is not supported by clear policies from the center.

Implementation Challenges and Strategies

The framework of this research is based on the analysis of the relationship between challenges and strategies in implementing an inclusive curriculum in elementary schools, especially in the context

of the role of teachers, supportive classroom environments, and school policies. The challenges faced by teachers include limited assessment and teacher skills in managing inclusive classes, lack of supporting facilities, and school policies that are not optimal in supporting inclusive education. Meanwhile, the strategies used involve teacher training, provision of appropriate learning facilities, and policies that encourage collaboration between related parties. Analysis of the relationship between challenges and strategies is very important to understand, because by identifying existing obstacles and implementing appropriate improvement steps, the quality of inclusive learning can be improved, which will ultimately form more positive social interactions in the elementary school environment.

It is assumed that there is a relationship between challenges and strategies in implementing the inclusive curriculum at SDN Dasin II. It is assumed that there are obstacles found in implementing the inclusive curriculum at SDN Dasin II. It is further assumed that SDN Dasin II has attempted to come up with strategies to minimize the obstacles faced when implementing the inclusive curriculum.

METHOD

The research method used to explore information related to the challenges and strategies faced by State Elementary School II Dasin in implementing the inclusive curriculum is a qualitative approach. This approach will reveal the phenomena that occur in the field and allow researchers to reveal the challenges and strategies carried out in facing the challenges of implementing the inclusive curriculum. This study conducted participatory observation in collecting data. Researchers conducted active observations at State Elementary School II Dasin to directly understand the challenges that teachers must face and teacher strategies in implementing the inclusive curriculum. Observations were carried out in a planned and systematic manner. In addition to observations, data collection was obtained from in-depth interviews. These interviews were in-depth with all teachers who were actively involved in implementing the inclusive curriculum. Data from observations and interviews were then analyzed and presented in a structured form. Data presentation helps researchers to understand the context and variety of information available. The results of data analysis were reduced, simplified and grouped based on certain themes or patterns.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The challenges faced by Elementary School II Dasin include teachers and schools, from the teacher's perspective, the material that must be delivered is too much, there has been no simplification related to the material, teachers have difficulty dividing their time because they have to make two materials for SSN and Non-SSN children. Meanwhile, from the school's perspective, there is no definite policy regarding the inclusive curriculum that is implemented. In addition, there are limited resources that understand the flow of implementing an inclusive curriculum in madrasas. The strategies taken to overcome these challenges are. 1) utilizing Information Technology-based learning media. 2) Providing services outside school hours 3) Providing SGT for children with special needs 4) Involving the role of parents in the child's learning process.

DISCUSSION

Challenges faced

Inclusive education means the teaching and learning process between children with special needs and non-disabled children in regular schools. In regular schools there must also be adjustments between the curriculum and learning methods with the abilities of each student. Ministry of Education and Culture Number 46 of 2014 regulates Special Education.¹² The implementation of inclusive education in schools involves several steps, including identification, assessment, classification, making a planning matrix, and developing individual learning programs. Adaptive curriculum is a curriculum that is adjusted to the knowledge and needs of students.¹³

The main challenge of Inclusive Curriculum Development at Dasin II Elementary School is that the Inclusive Curriculum (Merdeka) has a lot of material compared to the previous Curriculum (K-13 Curriculum). The themes and materials of the Merdeka curriculum are very detailed. Teachers

must be able to divide their time and find many references. The obstacles at school, apart from teaching, administratively there are many things that are needed or more extra (more) than the previous themes in the K-13 Curriculum. However, when working on the Report Card it is simpler than the Theme. The drawback is that there is a lot of material and it is very detailed, while some teachers are following the Mover Program, and many teachers leave the class because they are busy with the Mover Program, in the sense of leaving the class, and automatically students are only given assignments, while the number of teachers is limited and there are also teachers who hold classes. The school operator teacher also helps handle the class. The number of teachers is limited, and it is not allowed to increase the number of teachers, because of government regulations not to increase or limit the number of teachers in public schools.

The challenge for schools is the lack of human resources who actively understand how to play a role in implementing an inclusive curriculum, so that the inclusive curriculum cannot be implemented perfectly.¹⁴ The next challenge is the government's policy which is still unclear regarding the implementation of an inclusive curriculum in elementary schools.

Strategy to face challenges

The teacher's strategy in facing challenges is to look for more references, and also utilize learning media, especially electronic ones; such as using laptops, televisions and projectors to open YouTube. Wifi that is already available at school can be used to facilitate electronic-based learning, so that learning media is more varied and interesting for children, and so that children do not get bored and are more effective. The television in the school is used by Grades 5 and 6, while grades 1-4 still use projectors or maybe only use laptops. Most subjects in schools use electronic learning media, especially Natural and Social Sciences (NSS) subjects, because on television there are many images or videos that match the subject theme. For example, the NSS subject in grade 5 with the Earth material, just search and upload it and the children watch the video that has been shown. The teacher only needs to provide reinforcement (explanation) and then provide exercises and also has other support, namely Student Worksheets.

Teachers must provide special time for children with special needs. For example, after finishing learning or after school, children are given their own learning (additional), such as reviewing the material, or if the child cannot write or read, the teacher will also guide them as much as possible so that the child does not lag behind other children. Some of the reasons why a child cannot read or write can be caused by playing a lot of online games or mobile phones and lack of reprimands and parents. The vision of the school is to prioritize good character and make children have good ethics, rather than learning materials.

The role of parents and the community is important to face these challenges. Parents should pay more attention to their children when studying at home, and reprimand them if they play games or cellphones excessively and do not pay attention to study hours, parents would be better off giving their own time to accompany their children when studying at home so that children are more serious in studying. Parents must also help/reprimand their children so that they can manage their time well when it is time to play and study. for the surrounding community in general, please support learning activities or environmental conditions at the Elementary School II Dasin. especially for the security expected by the school, such as frequent damage to plants in the school because the scope of this school is very open, and if there are activities outside the classroom, such as walking or others, the community also supports the children.

Concrete steps for inclusive children, namely teachers provide special time for CSN children, such as when learning is finished (going home from school) or also during break time, teachers add extra hours to CSN. Elementary School II Dasin is not too pressurizing, but teachers are sufficient to provide additional attention to children and children feel happy with the attention from teachers.

The school also prepares SGT who must conduct apperception before starting learning. Apperception is an activity that teachers do to bring out students' knowledge by connecting the material with the students' own understanding. In CSN, apperception is done by adjusting the child's condition. If the child's mood does not support giving apperception, SGT will postpone it, but when the child is in a good mood, SGT will find it easier to start learning.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The challenges in implementing a teacher-centered curriculum. Schools must prepare SGT. SGT tasks include teaching inclusive students and creating IEP. IEP is a program designed by SGT by lowering Basic Competencies adjusted to the conditions of each individual. IEP consists of three activities: introduction, core, and closing. SGT carries out activities systematically according to the rules. SGT adjusts teaching methods to the child's mood.

An inclusive curriculum provides benefits, not only for SSN, but also for other parties involved. for teachers, employees, and other students. Inclusive education serves as a means to educate all students to respect other individuals who also have the same values and dignity. For SSN, inclusive education provides an opportunity to receive equal education and gain recognition for their equality.

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