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# COMMUNICATION-BASED CLASSROOMS: A NEW APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

# Muhammad Yazidus Syukri \*1 Politeknik Negeri Bandung yazidus@polban.ac.id

# Erna Widyasari

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta Email: g100230002@student.ums.ac.id

# **Djalal Fuadi**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta Email: df276@ums.ac.id

#### **Abstract**

Communication-based classrooms are an inclusive education approach that utilises augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies to support learners with special needs. The aim is to increase learners' participation, engagement and communication skills in the learning process, as well as to address their communication barriers. It also aims to develop digital literacy and social integration skills, creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. The study in this research uses the literature study method. The results show that: firstly, communication-based classrooms have benefits for improving learners' digital literacy skills, better social integration and emotional well-being. Secondly, this method can help overcome communication barriers often experienced by learners with special needs, giving them equal opportunities to reach their academic and social potential. Thirdly, there are challenges in implementing communication-based classrooms such as limited resources and budgets, lack of teacher training and skills, difficulties in integration with the current curriculum, and mixed attitudes and acceptance from learners, teachers and parents towards the use of technology in education. Overcoming these challenges requires a holistic approach that includes increased budgets, continuous training for teachers and socialisation to change negative views about technology in education.

**Keywords:** Classroom, Communication, Inclusive Education

# Introduction

Inclusive education is an important educational concept to provide equal access to all students regardless of their differences. The aim is to ensure all students, including those with special needs, can learn in mainstream schools while receiving support as needed (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024); (Xu & Kuti, 2021).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Correspondence author

The importance of inclusive education lies not only in the aspect of equity, but also in improving the overall quality of learning. When all students can learn together, it promotes mutual respect and empathy among them. In addition, inclusive environments help students grow socially and emotionally by learning to work together despite differences (Baglieri, 2022).

For educators, inclusive systems make them more creative and flexible in teaching diverse students. This can enrich the teaching and learning process (Hairiyanto et al., 2024); (Fiteriadi et al., 2024). For society, inclusive education shapes caring and inclusive citizens and creates a more harmonious community where everyone can contribute. Therefore, inclusive education is an important foundation for building a more just and humane education system (Bala, 2021).

One of the main challenges of inclusive education is communication. Students with special needs sometimes struggle to communicate and need support to participate optimally in class. Communication limitations can hinder their learning process. There is also a lack of adequate training and support for educators (Tönsing & Dada, 2023). Many teachers feel inadequately prepared or lack the necessary competencies to manage an inclusive classroom of students with very diverse needs. The lack of specialised training in inclusive learning strategies, curriculum adaptation and the use of assistive technology can lead to teachers being overwhelmed and ineffective in teaching all students. In addition, high student-teacher ratios and limited resources often reduce teachers' ability to provide the individualised attention that students with special needs require (Boon & Spencer, 2021).

In addition to constraints at the teaching level, adaptation of the physical environment is also a major challenge in the traditional inclusive education system. Many educational institutions do not have adequate infrastructure to accommodate students with various physical needs, such as friendly access, appropriate toilets, assistive equipment and adaptive teaching materials. This inadequate infrastructure can hinder the full participation of students with special needs in school activities (Zeedyk et al., 2021). At the institutional level, the lack of administrative support and funding allocation is also a significant barrier. Without supporting policies and adequate budget allocations, efforts to create inclusive learning environments are often hampered and unsustainable (Dimova & Kling, 2023). Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop methods that can enhance effective communication within inclusive learning spaces.

Communication-based learning spaces are emerging as one innovative approach to address this challenge. This approach emphasises the importance of using assistive learning technologies and alternative and additional communication methods to support interactions between students and educators and between students and other students. By utilising technology and customised communication strategies, it is hoped that classrooms can become more inclusive and open to all students (Westphal, 2021a).

In this context, this research seeks to explore communication-based classroom approaches in inclusive education, with the aim of identifying the benefits, challenges and key elements of these approaches.

### **Research Methods**

The study conducted in this research uses the literature research method, which is a research approach that uses written sources as the main material for analysis and interpretation. (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023); (Sahar, 2008); (Arikunto;, 2000).

## **Results and Discussion**

# **Communication-based Classroom Concept**

Classroom-based Communication is a learning approach that emphasises the importance of interaction and exchange of ideas between students and teachers, as well as between students and fellow students. In this context, communication is not only limited to oral communication, but also includes non-verbal communication, writing, drawing, as well as various other media that can help convey and receive information (Oleson, 2023). The main goal of Classroom-Based Communication is to create an environment that supports open dialogue, collaboration, and active engagement of all learners (Shaw, 2022).

The first basic principle of Classroom-Based Communication is interactivity. In this method, students are encouraged to actively participate in discussions, ask questions, give opinions, as well as co-operate in problem solving. This interactivity not only improves students' understanding of the material, but can also develop social and emotional skills, such as teamwork, empathy, and the ability to communicate effectively. The teacher acts as a facilitator who helps direct the discussion and ensures that all students have the opportunity to speak and listen (Lebenhagen, 2024); (Tubagus et al., 2023).

The second fundamental principle is active engagement and contextual relevance. Classroom-Based Communication emphasises learning that is relevant to students' experiences and interests, so they are more motivated to engage. Teachers utilise various strategies to make the subject matter fit into the context of students' lives, for example by using real-life examples, case studies, or problem-based projects (Aslan & Shiong, 2023); (Lebenhagen, 2024). Thus, students feel that what they learn has practical value and applicability in their daily lives, which in turn increases their interest and motivation to learn.

The third basic principle is continuous feedback. In Classroom-Based Communication, prompt and constructive feedback is essential to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses and provide direction for improvement (Dombrowski et al., 2020). Teachers provide feedback that is specific and tailored to the needs of each student, so that they can develop personally and academically. In

addition, students are also encouraged to give feedback to their peers and to the teacher, creating a mutually supportive and reflective learning environment (Power & Taylor, 2022).

Thus, Classroom-Based Communication is a learning approach that integrates interactivity, active engagement, continuous feedback, collaboration and the use of technology to create a dynamic and effective learning environment. It emphasises the importance of communication in all its forms to develop students' deep understanding, social skills and motivation to learn. By creating classrooms based on these principles, teachers can help students reach their full potential in both academic and personal development.

#### **Inclusive Education**

Including in education refers to a defined approach that ensures all learners, including those with special needs or disabilities, participate fully and equally in mainstream education settings. A key principle of inclusion is the removal of physical, social and academic barriers that may hinder learners' access to and participation in teaching and learning (Kecskemeti, 2020). This involves customising curricula, flexible teaching methods, and making the learning environment welcoming and supportive for all learners regardless of their background, abilities or special needs. The aim of including is to create a more just and equitable education system where every learner has equal opportunities to learn and develop (Tae, 2020).

The foundations and regulations related to inclusive education reflect a commitment to provide equal rights of access to education to all learners, including those with special needs or disabilities. In many countries, national legal and basic frameworks have been established to support inclusive education (Halafov, 2022). An example is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which mandates that member states must ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. In addition, many countries have special education laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States, which stipulates that children with disabilities are entitled to an appropriate education, and schools are required to provide the necessary resources to create an inclusive learning environment (Folostina & Tabacaru, 2022).

In Indonesia, inclusive education policies have been regulated in certain government regulations and laws, such as Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System and Permendikbud No. 70/2009 on Inclusive Education. These two regulations require that educational institutions must provide equal opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, to participate in the learning process (Jungjohann & Gebhardt, 2023). The implementation of inclusive education is also driven by local and national policies and programmes, such as teacher training in inclusive education, accessible facilities for all, and the provision of teaching tools and materials adapted to

the conditions of the students. These policies and regulations aim to create an educational environment that values diversity and inclusiveness so that all students can realise their full potential without discrimination (Matthews, 2024).

The current models of inclusive education vary and are tailored to the specific needs of students and their respective educational contexts. One commonly used model is full inclusion, where all learners, regardless of their special needs, are placed in regular classes with additional support as needed (Baglieri, 2022). This support could be in the form of teacher assistants, the use of assistive technology, or modifications to the curriculum and teaching methods. This model upholds the principle that full participation in the general education environment can support the promotion of social interaction, acceptance among students, and equal learning opportunities (Naiknavare & Maisel, 2022).

There is also the partial inclusion model, which involves including students with special needs in regular classes for most of the time, but still receiving special services in a separate room when needed. For example, a student might attend mainstream classes for standard subjects but seek more intensive support in separate sessions for specific subject areas such as maths or reading (Magiera, 2020). This model considers the individual needs of students and provides more customised support, while still supporting interaction and integration within the wider learning environment. Both models demonstrate flexibility in the implementation of inclusive education and emphasise that one approach does not fit all; each solution must be tailored to meet the special needs of each learner (Dykes et al., 2024).

Another model used in inclusive education is co-teaching, where a general education teacher works together with a special education teacher in the same classroom. This approach allows both teachers to share responsibility for teaching and supporting all students, with a particular focus on students with special needs. The interaction between the two teachers also allows for the creation of more comprehensive and adaptive teaching strategies and provides an example of professional co-operation that can enhance learning effectiveness (Aslan & Sucuoğlu, 2022); (Nurdiana et al., 2023); (Haddar et al., 2023).

In addition, there is also the resource room model, where students with special needs spend most of their time in the mainstream classroom, but receive additional support in the resource room from time to time. This model allows students to remain engaged in the standard learning environment while ensuring they receive more intensive individualised help when needed. Resource rooms are usually led by special education specialists who are trained to provide support appropriate to the needs of individual students (Foraker, 2020).

The various models of inclusive education that have been mentioned demonstrate that inclusive education is not just about placing students with special needs in regular classes, but also creating adaptive and supportive learning environments for all students. Full inclusion, partial inclusion, co-teaching and resource room approaches each offer different ways of meeting the varied needs of students in educational settings (Urton et al., 2023). With strong commitment from schools, clear policies and adequate training for teachers, inclusive education can be implemented more effectively. This will ultimately provide great benefits, not only for students with special needs, but also for the school community which becomes more inclusive and empathic as a whole (Paramita et al., 2021).

# **Techniques and Technologies in Communication-Based Classrooms**

The utilisation of assistive technology in inclusive education plays an important role in facilitating the learning process for students with special needs. These technologies include tools, software and applications designed to help students overcome physical, cognitive or sensory barriers. For example, text reader software and voice-to-write apps can help students who have difficulty in reading or writing (Thomas & Kumar, 2020). In addition, alternative communication aids such as tablets with communication apps can support nonverbal students in interacting effectively with teachers and classmates. Such assistive technologies enable students to become more independent, improve their access to the curriculum and promote active participation in classroom activities, thus reinforcing the fundamental principles of inclusive education of inclusion and accessibility for all (Proyer et al., 2021).

Alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) methods are strategies and tools used to help individuals with speech and writing impairments communicate more effectively. AAC encompasses a range of approaches from non-technological aids such as picture communication boards, to advanced technologies such as communication apps on tablets or computers that use voice output (Westphal, 2021b). These methods are designed to replace (alternative) or augment (augmentative) traditional means of communication, allowing users to participate in social interaction, education and daily activities without restriction. AAC plays a significant role in supporting the communication of students with autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy or other conditions that affect their verbal abilities (Mahoney, 2020).

The importance of implementing AAC in inclusive education cannot be overlooked, as the tools and methods can be individually customised to meet the unique needs of each student. Teachers and education personnel can be trained to implement AAC in the classroom to ensure all students have equal access to teaching and learning (Baglieri, 2022). For example, by using picture communication boards, students who cannot speak are still able to express their needs, feelings and ideas. On the other hand, communication apps on tablets can provide more flexibility in constructing words and sentences to support more complex communication. With proper implementation of AAC, communication barriers can be minimised, which in turn improves students' engagement, confidence and overall learning outcomes (Naranjo et al., 2022).

### Communication-based classroom effectiveness in inclusive education

Communication-based classrooms are an effective approach in inclusive education as they provide an environment that supports multiple ways of communicating, both verbally and non-verbally. By using additional and alternative communication tools and technologies such as illustrated communication boards, communication apps on tablets and speech-forming devices, students with various special needs can communicate more effectively with their teachers and classmates (Jiménez & Naranjo, 2022). This not only minimises communication barriers, but also ensures that every student has an equal opportunity to participate and learn together. The use of augmentative and alternative communication in inclusive classrooms also serves as a bridge for students with speech or motor impairments to interact and share their opinions freely, increasing their engagement and confidence in the educational environment (Liasidou, 2022).

In addition, communication-based classrooms encourage collaboration between students, teachers and other educators in creating an inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere. Teachers trained in the implementation of augmentative and alternative communication can provide individualised support that suits the needs of each student (Koreeda, 2023). For example, they can facilitate interaction by using the most effective means of communication for each student, ensuring that each student can understand and respond to instructions correctly. This helps to create a classroom atmosphere where all students feel valued and listened to, which in turn increases motivation to learn and co-operation between students. Moreover, with comprehensive resources and equipment in place, diverse ways of learning can be respected and celebrated, allowing each student to experience optimal academic and social growth (Westwood, 2024).

Moreover, communication-based learning spaces also have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes and social-emotional development. When students can communicate better, they feel more engaged and independent, which strengthens their self-confidence and independence. Research shows that students who use AAC tend to show improvements in language and academic skills as they are able to access and process information more efficiently. Moreover, an environment that supports inclusive communication also helps develop empathy and understanding among students who do not have special needs (Sharma & Ghosh, 2023). They learn to appreciate differences and support their peers who may communicate in diverse ways, which is an important value in an inclusive society based on respect for diversity. In the long run, inclusive education supported by communication-based learning spaces helps

to build more inclusive and self-reliant communities, both within and beyond the school environment (Bozdağ, 2022).

Communication-based learning spaces provide a strong foundation for inclusive education by offering support that meets the needs of students' diverse ways of communicating. With the use of augmentative and alternative communication tools and technologies, students with speech, motor or other special needs can communicate more effectively, increasing their participation and engagement in the learning process (Kefalaki & Diamantidaki, 2024). This approach not only helps to overcome communication barriers, but also encourages collaboration and the development of students' digital literacy skills and social-emotional well-being. Overall, communication-based learning spaces create a supportive and inclusive environment, providing equal opportunities for all students to thrive academically and socially, and equipping them with essential skills for future life. As such, this approach is an integral part of efforts to make education more inclusive and focused on valuing diversity (Lin, 2022).

# Communication-based classroom challenges in inclusive education implementation

One of the biggest obstacles to the implementation of communication-based classrooms is limited resources and budgets. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools and technologies often require large investments, both in procuring the devices and training teachers and staff in their use and maintenance. Many schools, especially those in remote areas, may not have adequate budgets to access these technologies. Lack of funding can also limit the ability of schools to make the updates or upgrades needed to keep the devices relevant and effective (Du, 2022).

While AAC technology has great potential, its effectiveness depends largely on teachers' ability to use it appropriately. Intensive and ongoing training is needed for teachers to understand how various communication tools work and how to apply them effectively in daily learning activities (Skinner et al., 2022). However, many teachers may not receive adequate training or ongoing support in this regard. Lack of skills and confidence among the teaching force may hinder the successful implementation of communication-based classrooms, even if devices and technologies are readily available (Indora, 2023).

Another challenge is the integration of AAC technology with the existing curriculum. The technology must be harmonised and integrated with existing teaching methods to work in harmony. Often, standard curricula are not designed with the use of alternative communication technologies in mind, which means teachers have to innovate and adapt their teaching methods. This process takes time and collaboration between teachers, technology specialists and curriculum developers, and requires consistent efforts to ensure all elements of learning support each other (Xenofontos et al., 2024); (Tuhuteru et al., 2023).

Cultural aspects and attitudes are also significant challenges in the implementation of communication-based classrooms. Students, teachers and parents may have different views on the use of technology in the classroom, especially when it involves students with special needs (Halder, 2023). Sometimes there is a stigma or concern that the use of AAC technology might make students too dependent on devices or reduce their chance of developing natural oral communication skills. Changing attitudes and gaining acceptance from all parties involved requires education, socialisation and consistent support, so that all parties understand the benefits and importance of these technologies in supporting inclusive education (Oleson & McNair, 2023).

Overcoming these challenges requires a holistic approach that includes increased budgets, ongoing training for teachers, curriculum adjustments, and efforts to change attitudes and increase public acceptance of communication technologies in inclusive education.

# Conclusion

The communication-based classroom is a new educational approach that is particularly useful for supporting the inclusion of students with special needs. By utilising assistive technology and communication alternatives, students can better engage in the teaching and learning process. This method not only solves communication barriers, but also fosters learners' digital literacy, social integration and emotional well-being. Therefore, communication-based classrooms provide a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, providing equal opportunities to realise their academic and social potential.

However, the implementation of communication-based classrooms is faced with certain challenges such as limited resources and funding, lack of teacher training and expertise, difficulties integrating it into the curriculum, and attitudes and responses from various parties. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive and collaborative efforts, including increased budgets, continuous training, and education and socialisation to change the stigma and negative views about the use of technology in inclusive education. Through concerted efforts, communication-based classrooms can become an integral part of an inclusive education system and adaptive to the needs of diverse learners.

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