

TEACHER STRATEGIES IN DEALING WITH STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Inclusive education is an approach to learning that provides inclusion to all learners, regardless of their achievements, disabilities or backgrounds, in the same environment. It involves adjusting the curriculum, teaching methods and additional support to ensure that every student has a fair and equal opportunity to receive a quality education. The research method used in this study is literature review. The results show that first, an inclusive classroom environment requires teachers to implement learning approaches that can effectively meet the individual needs of each student. Through an initial evaluation of learners' abilities and needs, teachers can design an adaptive curriculum tailored to their limitations. Secondly, teachers also need to implement student excellence-based learning strategies, such as multisensory, modeling and tiered assignments. The success of these strategies relies heavily on collaboration between teachers, parents, and various experts such as educational psychologists and therapists. Open and continuous communication between all parties is essential to ensure the strategies implemented remain appropriate and effective. Thus, the implementation of appropriate strategies and strong cooperation can provide equal opportunities for learners with disabilities to succeed in their learning.

Keywords: Teacher Strategies, Students, Special Needs, Elementary School.

Introduction

Inclusive education is an approach that allows schools to accommodate all students regardless of their abilities or needs. In this context, the presence of students with special needs in primary school classrooms is becoming increasingly commonplace. (Tomkunas, 2022). Inclusive education is therefore important because it ensures that all children,

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regardless of their physical, intellectual, social-emotional abilities or backgrounds, have equal opportunities for quality education (Alkhateeb et al., 2015). (Alkhateeb et al., 2023).. It seeks to eliminate discrimination and segregation in learning environments and promotes diversity and acceptance. Through inclusive education, students learn to appreciate differences and develop empathy, while at the same time all students are given the opportunity to realize their full potential. (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024); (Hairiyanto et al., 2024).

The implementation of an inclusive education system requires strategies and in-depth understanding from teachers to ensure that the education provided remains effective and beneficial. Given the diverse needs of each student, teachers must have specialized skills and appropriate strategies to face this challenge. (Adriantoni et al., 2022)..

Furthermore, students with special needs include conditions such as autism, learning disabilities, attention and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and various other physical conditions. The challenges faced by these students are often complex and require an individualized approach. Therefore, specialized skills and strategies from teachers are needed to accommodate their needs in an inclusive classroom. This is all the more important given the teacher's role as the main facilitator in the learning process. (Won, 2022).

Some strategies that can be implemented include differentiation in teaching, the use of adaptive technology, and a collaborative approach between teachers, students and parents. Differentiation in teaching means that teachers must be able to adjust subject matter and delivery methods according to the needs of each child. (Irgens, 2023). This includes providing teaching materials that are accessible to all students, providing tasks that are challenging but within their capacity, and using a variety of teaching methods that can motivate students to learn more effectively. (Ni'matuzahroh et al., 2020)..

Adaptive technology can be a significant solution to the challenges of inclusive education. Specially designed software and hardware can accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities or physical impairments, allowing them to learn at their own pace. (Dilla, 2023). Teachers need to actively communicate with parents to understand their child's background and specific needs, and involve parents in their child's education. This will create a more supportive learning environment. In addition, collaboration between teachers, students, parents, educational psychologists and therapists is needed. (Tubagus et al., 2023); (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

Successfully managing an inclusive classroom depends largely on the teacher's ability to identify students' needs and adapt teaching approaches accordingly. Effective inclusive education requires a combination of educational knowledge, social sensitivity, and technical and practical skills. Teachers need to continuously improve their capacity through regular training and adoption of best practices. (Nurdiana et al., 2023)..

However, realization is not easy as many teachers feel underprepared to handle students with special needs. This requires greater attention from education policy and support from schools and the teaching community. More research and investment is

needed to develop and disseminate tools and resources to better support the role of teachers (Putriani, 2023).

This study focuses on evaluating the technology infrastructure in Indonesian schools, understanding the obstacles faced by teachers in optimizing technology, and exploring students' views on the benefits of applying technology in the learning process. An understanding of these issues is expected to support the development of the maximum utilization of educational technology in Indonesia to support the quality of learning in the digital era.

Research Methods

The study conducted in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method is a series of activities that involve collecting data from various library sources such as books, journals, articles, and other reliable sources. This research is usually used to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular topic through reading, recording, and processing information that has been published. (Afiyanti, 2008); (Syahran, 2020).

Results and Discussion

Definition and Classification of Special Needs

Students with special needs refer to students who need additional or different educational and support services than other students in order to realize their full potential. These needs can arise for a variety of reasons, including physical conditions such as physical abnormalities or chronic health problems; intellectual needs such as specific learning difficulties or giftedness; and social-emotional needs such as psychological disorders or behavioral problems. Inclusive education seeks to identify and meet these needs through adjustments to the curriculum, the application of different teaching strategies and the provision of appropriate support, so that all students can learn together in an environment that respects differences and promotes equality. (Suryadi & Armanto, 2023)..

The types of needs are;

First, Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complex developmental condition that affects the way a person communicates, interacts and behaves. Individuals with autism may experience difficulties in social interactions, have narrow or intense interests, and exhibit repetitive behaviors. The degree of symptoms can vary greatly, and appropriate support must be tailored to each individual's specific needs. Education for students with autism often requires specialized teaching strategies, such as the use of visual aids, consistent routines, and evidence-based interventions to improve communication and social skills. (Hsu & Chiou, 2023).

Second, ADHD is a neuropsychological developmental disorder characterized by difficulty maintaining attention, hyperactivity, and impulsive behaviors that are inappropriate for the individual's developmental level. Children with ADHD often have

difficulty following instructions, completing tasks, and managing time. They may also be quickly distracted and often switch from one activity to another without completing it. Educational approaches for ADHD students may include clear classroom management strategies, consistent structure, and modifications to tasks and assessments to maximize engagement and academic achievement (Olumorin et al., 2015). (Olumorin et al., 2022)..

Thirdly, Dyslexia is one of the specific learning disorders that will mainly affect one's reading and writing skills. Children who are dyslexic often find difficulty in automatic word recognition, improper spelling, and lower reading comprehension skills. Despite normal or even above average intelligence, individuals with dyslexia may require alternative learning approaches, such as structured phonetic methods, technological support such as text reader software, as well as additional time to complete assignments or exams. With the right support, students with dyslexia can achieve academic success and develop their literacy skills (Rasmitadila et al., 2022).

Fourthly, there are other types of special needs such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, sensory processing disorder and chronic medical conditions. Each type has unique accommodations and learning strategies needed to ensure inclusion and accessibility in the learning environment. The support provided to students with these special needs relies heavily on individualized evaluations as well as collaboration between educators, families, and medical professionals or related experts. (Loopers et al., 2022).

As such, special needs cover a wide range of developmental conditions and impairments that can affect the way a person learns, interacts and functions on a daily basis. Autism, ADHD and dyslexia are some prime examples that require a customized learning approach to support their academic engagement and achievement. Each condition has its own characteristics and challenges, which require unique teaching strategies and individualized support. By paying special attention to each individual's needs and through collaboration between educators, families and relevant professionals, we can create learning environments that are inclusive and support optimal development for all students with special needs.

Legal Basis for Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is one of the priorities of the Indonesian government to realize equal rights in obtaining education for every citizen regardless of their background. This is regulated in various laws and regulations, including Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which states that every citizen has the same right to obtain quality education. (Brittle, 2020). This regulation guarantees the right of children with special needs to get equal access to education (Radhadangu et al., 2020). (Radhadangu et al., 2020)..

In addition, Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70/2009 on Inclusive Education provides more detailed guidelines on how inclusive education should be implemented in all schools, both public and private, by accepting learners with special needs and providing appropriate learning facilities. It also covers teacher training,

curriculum adaptation and other facilities to ensure all learners can learn well. (Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2023)..

Indonesia has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011. This convention affirms the country's commitment to promote, protect and ensure the right to inclusive and quality education for persons with disabilities. (Wahyuni et al., 2023).. By ratifying the convention, Indonesia demonstrates its determination to eliminate discrimination in education and support the full participation of children with disabilities in the public education system (Utari et al., 2023). (Utari et al., 2023)..

Inclusive Education Strategy

Creating a learning environment that is open to all students is a basic principle of inclusive education. To realize this, various efforts must be implemented, including improving the competence of educators, adjusting the curriculum to the abilities of learners, and providing facilities that allow all students to learn without barriers. (Hikmah & Ahmadi, 2020)..

One important step is to enrich the knowledge and skills of educators. Teachers need to be equipped with an in-depth understanding of the characteristics and needs of students with special needs, as well as the latest teaching methods to accommodate differences between students. Continuous training is expected to enrich the pedagogical repertoire of educators (Brown & Salzman, 2024).

In addition, adjustments to the syllabus and teaching materials are a necessity. Learning materials need to be simplified according to students' level of understanding. Visual aids and modifications to tasks and tests are implemented so that all learners can follow the teaching and learning process well. This aims to ensure full participation of students in every activity in the classroom. (Oppermann & Lazarides, 2021)..

Building school infrastructure that is friendly to all is also necessary. Learning spaces, toilets and other facilities must prioritize accessibility. The utilization of supporting technology such as special software and learning aids will support the inclusion process in schools. With these efforts, schools are expected to provide a comfortable learning environment for all students without exception. (Sessiani & Syukur, 2021).

Cooperation between schools, families and communities is also important in inclusive education. Parents or guardians play a vital role in a child's development and education. Involving them in the teaching and learning process and decision-making about their child's education will make the educational approach more comprehensive and holistic (Vasel & Ragonis, 2024). (Vasel & Ragonis, 2024).. In addition, building partnerships with non-governmental organizations, health institutions and other support services can provide additional resources and expertise that support effective implementation of inclusive education. With the participation of all parties, this strategy ensures that children with special needs get the support they need to succeed in their educational environment. (Supriadi, 2020).

An important component of an inclusive education strategy is the provision of emotional and social support for learners. Schools should build a culture that supports inclusiveness through promoting the values of tolerance, empathy and respect for differences (Sarmila et al., 2023). (Sarmila et al., 2023).. Organizing activities or programs that support positive interactions between learners from different backgrounds can strengthen social relationships and enrich the learning experiences of all learners. For example, peer mentor programs or buddy systems bring learners with special needs together with peers who can help them with different aspects of school life (Haddar et al., 2023). (Haddar et al., 2023)..

In addition, continuous evaluation and monitoring are essential elements in an inclusive education strategy. Through continuous monitoring, schools can see what is working and what needs to be improved in the implementation of their inclusive program. (Heo & Lee, 2023). Valid and reliable evaluation tools should be used to measure the academic and social progress of learners with special needs and to identify areas where additional interventions are needed. Evaluation not only helps in measuring the success of the program, but also allows for adjustments that are more responsive to the needs of learners (Kusmaryono & Maharani, 2021)..

Educational technology plays an important role in inclusive education. The use of technology can help overcome various learning barriers that students with special needs may face. For example, specially designed educational software can help students with learning difficulties to gain access to subject matter more easily (Rejeki et al., 2022). (Rejeki et al., 2022).. Assistive technologies such as computers with voice-to-text recognition software, supportive communication devices, and sensory-based educational applications are able to provide the additional support that students with different types of disabilities need (Touloupis & Athanasius, 2012). (Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2023)..

Overall, effective inclusive education strategies require a systematic and comprehensive approach. Teacher training, curriculum adaptations, disability-friendly physical environments, strong collaboration between schools, families and communities, and technology support play an important role in ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to learn. (Dadds, 2020). By implementing these strategies, schools are able to create an environment that supports the academic and social development of all students, regardless of their differences or special needs. (Alfira & Fathoni, 2023)..

Inclusive education is not only the responsibility of schools, but also the shared responsibility of the community to create a fairer and more equal education system. Through cooperation and a strong commitment from all parties involved, inclusive education can become a reality, benefiting all students and the wider community. (Arianto, 2021).

Supporting and inhibiting factors for inclusive education

Inclusive education is a learning concept that aims to provide equal opportunities for all learners, including those with physical or psychological disabilities, to follow the

learning process together in the same classroom. However, effective implementation of inclusive education requires a variety of interrelated supporting factors (Istiningsih et al., 2022)..

One crucial factor is government support in the form of clear policies and regulations and adequate funding. This is important to ensure that each educational institution has adequate capacity, such as skilled teaching staff and infrastructure that meets inclusion standards. (KARAKUŞ et al., 2023).. In addition, operational standards that uphold the rights of learners with special needs can ensure inclusive practices are consistent at all levels (Sider & Maich, 2023). (Sider & Maich, 2022)..

The awareness and positive attitude of the entire school community, including teachers, students and parents/guardians are also very supportive. Increased understanding of the importance of inclusiveness through targeted socialization can reduce stigma and discrimination, creating a friendly learning climate for all. (Blavt et al., 2022)..

The development of educators' professional competencies plays a major role, as teachers who are skilled in inclusive methodologies and practices are able to maximize the potential of each learner. Training not only emphasizes teaching techniques but also understanding the emotional and social needs of learners (Chandler & Hagaman, 2020).

Educational technology support, such as specialized learning apps, inclusive software, and other assistive devices, can help overcome learning barriers. This allows the learning process to be more personalized and adaptive (Samuelsson, 2020). On the other hand, several inhibiting factors often make it difficult to implement inclusion. One of these is limited resources, both financial and human. This often makes it difficult to provide the necessary specialized facilities and services. Lack of training and understanding among educators is also a barrier. Without adequate training, teachers find it difficult to manage a classroom with diversity. (Salikhov & Salikhov, 2021).. Stigma and negative societal attitudes also limit acceptance and integration. Finally, the lack of inclusive physical infrastructure makes full participation difficult.

Conclusion

Effective strategies for serving students with special needs in primary school classrooms require an inclusive and flexible approach. Teachers need to conduct an in-depth evaluation of each student's individual capacities and requirements. This initial approach allows teachers to design a curriculum that can be adapted to the specific needs of students, which includes adjustments in teaching methods, learning materials and classroom environment.

In addition to curriculum adjustments, the implementation of learning strategies based on student potential is very important. Teachers must be able to identify the talents and interests of each student with special needs, and approach teaching in a way that capitalizes on these strengths. Methodologies such as multi-sensory learning, modeling,

and tiered assignments can help students with various needs to more easily understand and master the material being taught.

The success of these strategies also relies heavily on cooperation between teachers, guardians and other educational institutions. Collaboration with experts such as educational psychologists, therapists and inclusive education consultants is necessary to design and implement appropriate strategies. An open and continuous communication between all parties allows for regular monitoring and adjustment of strategies to ensure that every student with special needs receives a quality and equal education.

The implications for teaching practices in inclusive classrooms involve increasing teachers' flexibility in designing and delivering learning, ensuring that every student, including those with special needs, gets equal opportunities to succeed. Teachers must develop skills in managing diverse classrooms, using a variety of methods and tools that can meet students' individual needs. This can include adjusting the curriculum, using assistive technology, and adopting differentiated and collaborative learning approaches. In addition, inclusive teaching practices also emphasize the importance of a classroom environment that supports social inclusion, where every student feels valued and accepted, and is actively involved in the learning process. Professional support and ongoing training for teachers is also crucial to ensure they can meet the challenges and needs of all students effectively and empathetically.

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