

Learning Challenges Of Children With Special Needs In A Generalized Learning System

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Background: A uniform inclusive education system is often unable to adequately meet the learning needs of children with special needs, ultimately hindering their academic and social progress. This situation reflects a fundamental incompatibility between broadly applied education policies and the individual demands of students in inclusive settings.

Objectives: This study aims to identify various obstacles experienced by children with special needs in integrated learning environments while examining the contribution of teachers in addressing these challenges.

Method: A qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through structured observation and in-depth interviews with teachers and school managers involved in inclusive education programs.

Result: Key findings indicate that children with special needs face difficulties in grasping subject matter presented in a standard manner, experience restrictions in social interaction, and encounter a lack of adaptation in teaching methods to their individual characteristics. Furthermore, teachers face significant obstacles in providing intensive guidance, including limited instructional time, an excessive number of students, insufficient specialized training in inclusive education, and the constraints imposed by a rigid curriculum.

Conclusion: These findings suggest that systemic reform is necessary, particularly in teacher qualification criteria and professional development, to strengthen a genuinely inclusive learning ecosystem in which the potential of children with special needs can develop optimally.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic need for everyone who plays an important role in the process of transmitting knowledge across generations through teaching and training

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activities (Latifah, 2020). In addition, education is also a means to develop one's potential, form a systematic mindset, and improve the quality of life of individuals throughout life. The right to education has been guaranteed by the state through Article 31 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which expressly mandates that every citizen has the right to education. This stipulation is strengthened through Article 5 paragraph (1) of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which emphasizes that all citizens have the same opportunity to get quality education.

This legal foundation is the basis for the implementation of inclusive education, which is an educational service mechanism that ensures fair and equal opportunities for all students, including children with special needs (ABK), to learn together in the same educational environment while still paying attention to their individual needs. This effort aims to create a friendly, fair, and non-discriminatory learning environment so that every child is able to develop optimally. Inclusive education is an educational approach that aims to ensure equal access to learning for all students, including children with special needs, in an inclusive learning environment. This approach emphasizes the importance of equality, respect for diversity, and acceptance of differences in the learning process (Irvan & Jauhari, 2018). In practice, inclusive education is often juxtaposed with the concept of integration education, which is an educational service that places children in a learning environment with regular children by providing certain adjustments (Simorangkir et al., 2022; Widiastuti, 2020). So that children with special needs do not feel different from other children, teachers have an obligation to provide appropriate support to encourage their development optimally for children with special needs, as well as other normal children to be involved in activities that take place at school. Thus, children's social-emotional development can be achieved optimally, which reflects the characteristics of quality inclusive early childhood education (Iswayuningsih et al., 2018:26).

However, the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is still faced with various challenges. One of the problems that often arises is the implementation of a learning system that tends to be generalized without considering the characteristics and individual needs of students. This condition can have an impact on learning difficulties experienced by ABK, such as obstacles in understanding the material, delays in language development, and difficulties in social interaction (Khuru'Aini & Setiyatna, 2025). If not treated with the right approach, the condition can affect the child's overall development.

In addition, the limited competence of teachers and the lack of supporting facilities are also obstacles in the implementation of inclusive education.

Sometimes teachers equate the demands of their abilities with children their age, or have difficulty dealing with them (Suharsiwati, 2017:2). Many teachers do not have special skills in handling ABK, as well as educational facilities that are not fully friendly to the needs of children with diverse abilities. In fact, in inclusive learning, the role of teachers is crucial in creating an adaptive learning environment through assessments, flexible learning strategies, and collaboration with parents and experts. Thus, even though inclusive education policies have a strong foundation, their implementation in the field is still not optimal, especially in the context of learning that is still equalized.

Research on inclusive education shows that the implementation of learning for children and children still faces various obstacles, especially in terms of teacher competence, the availability of facilities, and the implementation of learning strategies that are not fully adaptive. Study by Wahyuni et al., (2024), emphasizing the importance of school readiness in providing competent facilities and educators. Meanwhile, Utami et al., (2025) Highlighting enabling inclusive learning through a flexible and child-centred approach. Other research also shows that undifferentiated learning is still a major obstacle to the development of ABK in inclusive schools.

Although various studies have discussed the implementation of inclusive education, most of them still focus on policy aspects, teacher competence, and institutional readiness in general. However, studies that specifically examine the learning challenges of ABK in the learning system that are generalized at the PAUD level are still limited. In addition, there is still limited research that directly examines practices in the field based on the results of real observations related to how teachers overcome limited facilities and the absence of special assistants. Therefore, the novelty in this study lies in the focus of the study that directly analyzes the learning challenges of children with special needs in the learning system which is generalized by focusing on the limitations of facilities, as well as revealing the adaptive strategies of teachers in providing learning stimulation based on real conditions in the PAUD environment. Based on the available information, this study aims to analyze the learning challenges of children with special needs in the learning system that is generalized at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level, with an emphasis on the limitations of learning support facilities.

METHODS

This observation uses a qualitative research method, which collects data through observation and interviews. Obstacles in the learning process of children have special needs in an inclusive education system that is generally uniform

studied thoroughly. This selection approach is based on the ability to contextually reveal phenomena based on the direct experience of teachers and principals in educational institutions. At Darussalam Palembang Kindergarten located on Jl. Cik Agung Kimas No.59, Bukit Kecil District, Palembang City, South Sumatra, this research was specifically conducted. Through direct interaction with teachers, principals, and children with special needs, the researcher functions as an important tool in the data collection process.

Purposive sampling is used to select informants. The main criterion for selecting informants is their level of active involvement in the daily learning process. Three main methods were used for data collection: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation serves to see firsthand the dynamics of learning in the classroom through interviews, and interviews explore the experiences and challenges faced by respondents. Meanwhile, documentation serves to refine the findings by collecting relevant field records and archives. The model used is interactive for data analysis, which includes the stages of data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of sources and methods is used to maintain the validity and reliability of the research results

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research at Darussalam Kindergarten show that learning for children with special needs (ABK) still faces many problems, especially in the learning system that is usually equalized. The main findings show that the limitation of special facilities is the main factor that affects whether the learning process runs or not. The absence of adaptive learning media, special tools, and a learning environment that has not been fully designed to meet the needs of individual ABK are some of the facilities in question. This condition has a direct impact on classroom learning. In line with that Dacholfany et al., (2023), say in the omitted or elimination model, which means eliminating something, can be used in appropriate learning methods for children with special needs. In the context of the curriculum, this model can be used to eliminate part or all of the material that has been determined by the National Education Standards Agency (BNSP) because the material is too difficult or cannot be implemented by students with special needs.

Children with disabilities tend to have difficulty participating in generally designed learning activities without adequate adjustments. For example, in classical learning activities, children experience obstacles in understanding instructions, following the flow of activities, and adjusting to the same learning tempo as other children. It indicates that the limited facilities in addition to having an effect on

technical learning, also have an impact on children's involvement in learning activities. Conceptually, this condition is not in line with the basic principles of the inclusion approach which pays full attention to providing an accessible and responsive learning environment in the different needs of students. The limitations of supporting facilities, including classrooms that are not optimal, and minimal learning support equipment, can cause very significant obstacles. In addition, Akbar et al., (2024) revealed that the limitations of facilities and infrastructure, including classrooms that are inadequate to support learning activities, can cause very significant obstacles. Meanwhile, the small scope of teaching staff who have received uneven ABK identification and assessment training can reduce the quality of teaching given to them. In this case, meeting the needs of teachers' competencies must not only be able to understand the characteristics of ABK through adjustments to learning methods, but also the provision of training and facilities from institutions can be the main obstacle (Owa et al., 2023).

In addition to limited facilities, observation data also shows that there are no special assistant teachers (*Shadow Teachers*) in the school. The absence of these assistants triggers classroom teachers to have to manage classes alone for students, including ABK with diverse needs. As a result, teachers' attention is divided, so that the provision of optimal learning services for children and children is less than optimal. In some situations, teachers focus more on general classroom management than on providing special interventions to ABK.



Figure 1. Documentation of researchers when conducting observations and interviews with teachers and principals

However, the results of the observation also show that there are adaptive efforts made by teachers in dealing with these limitations. Children can have the opportunity to learn the material presented through an adaptive approach that best suits their needs so that they are able to hone their skills gradually and achieve more optimal learning outcomes in the long term (Boiliu & Messakh, 2024). When the learning process takes place, teachers do not fully implement equalized learning, but try to provide more individualized stimulation to ABK. For example, teachers pay more intense attention, use a simpler communication approach, and adjust learning activities to make them easier for children to understand. This effort reflects the teacher's awareness of the importance of adjusting learning according to children's needs. This learning approach is in line with Biantoro & Rahmatullah's research which states that with these efforts, early childhood who need special assistance can receive encouragement from educators with the right target to pursue their educational goals (Biantoro & Rahmatullah, 2024).

According to Vygotsky in (Aprianti et al., 2025) states that social interaction has a central role in shaping one's knowledge and abilities through a constructivist approach. He emphasized that the learning process basically arises from social interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment and culture, which is the main challenge in the learning model system that is generalized for children with special needs (ABK) because the uniform approach often ignores the dynamics of these unique interactions.

However, the actions of teachers are only individuals and have not been accompanied by either the system or the overall school infrastructure. The absence of adequate facilities and special assistance personnel shows that the implementation of education in schools without discrimination is still not optimal. This condition indicates that the success of inclusive learning does not only rely on the competence and initiative of educators, there is a need for systemic assistance in the form of educational institution policies, the provision of facilities, and collaboration with various related parties. Inclusive education requires the support of comprehensive and sustainable education policies. This policy should cover various aspects that are important to create a fair and welcoming learning environment for all students, including those with special needs (Wiranata et al., 2021).

Education policies that support inclusive education must include ongoing training for teachers, adequate funding and resources, and strong anti-discrimination policies. With these policies, it can create an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students, helping them reach their full potential. This is in line with the statement conveyed by Desy et al., (2024) that all

elements in education must pay extra attention to the implementation of inclusive education. These include government policies, the participation of parents of students and the community, support from special service institutions, the role of teachers as the main implementers of inclusive education, and effective management of institutions. The involvement of all parties is essential to achieve educational goals well. By creating a supportive environment for all school residents, the learning atmosphere will be conducive, so that the potential of children/students can emerge and develop optimally.

Overall, the observation data show that the main challenge in learning for children with disabilities in a standardized system lies in the limited facilities that have an impact on the lack of optimal learning process. Although teachers have demonstrated adaptive efforts through the provision of individualized stimulation, these limitations remain significant obstacles to achieving inclusive and equitable learning. Thus, there is a need for comprehensive action from both schools and policy makers, to provide adequate facilities and professional support to improve the quality of learning without discrimination.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study can be concluded that the education system that is generalized has not been able to adequately meet the learning needs of children with special characteristics. The results of the analysis found that the existence of the same approach to teaching methods, material content, and assessment mechanisms for all students actually caused various obstacles, both in the realm of academic achievement and the dynamics of social relations. In addition, the limitations of inadequate special facilities and the lack of special assistant teachers in providing personalized guidance, as well as the lack of training programs on inclusive education. This conclusion also highlights the urgency of adopting a more flexible and inclusive learning strategy, which is realized through modifications to strengthen teacher qualifications, as well as the creation of a learning environment that is friendly to diversity. For future research, it is recommended that further studies be conducted on the extent of the effectiveness of the inclusive learning approach in advancing children's learning achievement and social progress in the long term.

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