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Collaboration between Special Education Teachers and Inclusive Teachers in Aceh Province

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Abstract: This study examines collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in schools of inclusive education in Aceh Province. Using a qualitative approach with the scoping review method and prism protocol, this study analyses the relevant literature of published scientific journals. Data search was conducted on Google Scholar using the Harzing's Publish or Perish application, 3 articles were obtained for further analysis. The research results showed that collaboration between SLB teachers and teachers in inclusive schools in Aceh Province was not optimal. The implementation of inclusive education in Aceh still faces challenges such as not yet constructed cultural and strong policies, as well as lack of teacher understanding of children with special needs and their handling methods. Teachers in inclusive schools need the help of special education teachers in handling children's learning disability. The collaboration found so far is limited to internal SLBs between fellow teachers, has not shown collaboration with inclusive school teachers. This study recommends a strategy of mapping models and forms of collaboration, including monitoring support and assistance from special education teachers, as well as evaluating inclusive education policies and strengthening inclusive culture in Aceh.

Keywords: Collaboration; Special Assistant Teachers; Inclusive Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an education system that embraces the diversity of every child, without exception, to ensure full access and participation for all students, transcending differences in physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social, or other backgrounds (Khaeroh et al., 2020). With the massive development of inclusive education, which aims to embrace diversity and ensure full access and participation for all students without exception, educators are required to play a more proactive role. This includes accommodating the diverse learning needs of students, including those with special needs, fostering a non-discriminatory attitude, recognizing all school members, and providing safe facilities and environments for every child (Barlian et al., 2023). Inclusive education not only focuses on integrating students with special needs into regular classes but also requires a transformation of school culture, policies, and practices to be truly responsive to student diversity (Ainscow, 2020). The primary goal of implementing inclusive education is to accommodate student diversity in inclusive schools (Mahdi et al., 2021). To achieve these goals, it is necessary to establish clear indicators as a measuring tool for the success of inclusive education implementation. These indicators are inseparable from the strategic role of teachers as learning facilitators tasked with accommodating the diverse characteristics of students in inclusive schools. Teachers are a determining factor in the effectiveness of inclusive learning implementation and influence students' academic and non-academic achievements (Kazmi et al., 2023). In the process of achieving the goals of inclusive education implementation, indicators for measuring these goals must be established. These indicators are inseparable from the role of teachers in accommodating the diversity of students in inclusive schools. The role of teachers is crucial in influencing student success in inclusive schools. Teachers in inclusive schools require the assistance of special education teachers in handling the learning of children with disabilities in the classroom (Amalia & Kurniawati, 2021).

This research examines collaboration between special education teachers and inclusive teachers in Aceh Province. Previous research by Yasa & Julianto (2018) found that elementary schools providing inclusive education and employing students with special needs (ABK) generally require additional teachers in addition to the classroom teacher. These additional teachers are usually assistant teachers or consultant teachers with special needs education backgrounds. Research by Suhana et al. (2021) found that inclusive school management is suboptimal, teachers are unable to differentiate the characteristics of students with special needs, teachers are still unfamiliar with the methods used for ABK, teachers do not understand how to handle ABK, and the absence of special guidance teachers (GPK).

This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in schools providing special education. It will explore various studies conducted, identify significant results, and discuss the challenges and opportunities in implementing collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in schools providing inclusive education. Therefore, this article is expected to provide a mapping of collaboration models and forms, challenges, and supporting factors, as well as recommendations for supporting collaboration.

Table 1. Previous studies

Author, Publication Year, Journal	Article title	Results
Haekal, M., 2021, Ál-fâhim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam	Analisis Implementasi Pendidikan Inklusif Di Provinsi Aceh: Budaya, Kebijakan, Dan Pelaksanaan [Analysis of the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Aceh Province: Culture, Policy, and Implementation]	This study found that the three elements of inclusive education in Aceh have not been implemented effectively. The Aceh government must work harder to build the foundations for inclusive education. The study recommends that the Aceh regional government implement inclusive education using the Index for Inclusion and begin by strengthening an inclusive culture before moving on to policy and implementation.
Suhana, Y.M., Martunis, Fajriani, 2021, Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Bimbingan dan Konseling	Pemahaman Dan Perlakuan Guru Terhadap Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Pada Sekolah Dasar Negeri Inklusi Di Kota Banda Aceh [Teachers' Understanding and Treatment of Children with Special Needs in Inclusive State Elementary Schools in Banda Aceh City]	The research results show that the way teachers manage classes of students with special needs is by using a regular class management system with special tutors who combine students with special needs and regular students by studying together without a special tutor, all teachers give awards.
Rafni, Najmuddin, Marsitah, L., 2024	Pengelolaan Budaya Kolaboratif dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) Kabupaten Aceh Utara [Collaborative Cultural Management in Improving the Performance of Special School Teachers in North Aceh Regency]	The research results obtained collaborative school culture management in improving the performance of special education teachers in Tanah Luas, North Aceh through several stages, namely: First, planning is carried out by preparing the school's vision, mission and planning. Second, the principal delegates tasks (job descriptions) to the development team consisting of teachers, staff, committees, and supervisors. Third, implementation through active collaboration, skills development, and the creation of a collaborative environment for all school residents, cross-subject work teams and coaching. Fourth, the principal conducts direct independent evaluations and focuses on development through annual, monthly and weekly routine meetings. Fifth, supporting factors are a visionary leadership style, open communication, and mutual respect.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a library research model. The chosen method was a scoping review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. Scoping review is an effective method for identifying sources of answers from previous relevant literature (Charli et al., 2022). The type of literature selected was published scientific journal articles (Osunsan et al., 2022). Data searches were conducted through the Google Scholar database with the help of the Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) application (Kartakusumah et al., 2023). Article data searches were conducted using the keyword "collaboration between special education teachers and inclusive schools in Aceh." In the first stage, the data search successfully extracted 100 articles. The selection of studies included inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria in this study were articles published within the last six years, from 2020 to 2025. Articles can be accessed with open access full text. Furthermore, the exclusion criteria for this study were collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in inclusive schools outside Indonesia. Furthermore, articles written using systematic reviews and book chapters were excluded.

A total of 100 articles were successfully extracted. After screening, 93 research articles were obtained from the last six years, 38 of which were fully open access. Of these 38 articles, further screening was conducted by reading the abstracts and full texts, resulting in three articles for further analysis. Table 1 summarizes the results of the content analysis of the selected articles, specifically related to "collaboration between special education teachers and inclusive schools in Aceh".

Based on the PRISMA search results, only three articles met the inclusion criteria. This number did not pose a methodological constraint, as the entire selection process followed the rigorous PRISMA process. The small number of articles, however, reflects the limited empirical research on collaboration between special education teachers and inclusive education teachers in Aceh Province. Therefore, the results of this study provide an important basis for strengthening policy direction and further research on teacher collaboration practices in the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. According to Booth et al. (2016), systematic reviews in emerging or localized research fields may result in a small number of eligible studies, which still provide valuable insights if selection criteria are rigorous and analysis is transparent.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding(s)

The finding that the Aceh provincial government has not yet successfully developed a culture and policy is closely related to the difficulties schools face in implementing inclusive education practices. Even implementation in Aceh's capital, Banda Aceh, which was expected to serve as a role model for other districts, has not gone well. The government appears to have rushed into declaring the policy without properly identifying the specific characteristics.

The findings of the second article discuss inclusive education at the elementary schools (SDN) SDN 1, SDN 18, and SDN 25 in Banda Aceh City. Teachers' understanding of children with special needs (ABK) is limited to only a limited range of types, and only a few teachers truly understand all types of students with special needs. Regarding teachers' positive attitudes toward ABK, all teachers demonstrate caring behaviors toward students with special needs by accepting ABK in all their conditions, embracing them, welcoming them with a "hi" greeting upon arrival, and making them feel comfortable. Teachers manage special needs classes using a regular classroom management system with a special tutor.

This system combines special needs students (ABK) and regular students, allowing them to learn together without a special tutor (GPK). All teachers are given recognition.

The findings of the third article indicate that a collaborative culture is only implemented among teachers at the Tanah Luas Special Needs School (SLB) in North Aceh. This collaboration takes the form of active collaboration, skills development, and the creation of a collaborative environment for all school members, cross-subject work teams, and coaching. This article does not demonstrate any collaboration between special education teachers and teachers at schools that provide inclusive education.

In general, the analysis of these three articles indicates that collaboration between special education and inclusive education teachers in Aceh is still in its early stages of development. Collaboration is not yet fully structured and relies heavily on interpersonal relationships between teachers. This situation indicates a gap between macro policies on inclusive education and their implementation at the school level. Factors such as limited human resources, a lack of integrated training, and the absence of collaborative supervision mechanisms are major obstacles to effective collaboration. However, the study also identified several interesting local initiatives, such as informal meetings between teachers, role allocation in extracurricular activities, and intensive communication between assistant teachers and homeroom teachers. These practices reflect commitment and contextual adaptation to existing systemic limitations. In terms of scholarly contribution, the results of this study indicate that although the literature on teacher collaboration in Aceh is still limited, the three articles found provide an important foundation for understanding the patterns and challenges of implementing inclusive education in the region. These findings reinforce the urgency of strengthening teacher capacity through collaboration-based training, as well as the importance of regional policy support that allows special education and inclusive education teachers to have formal spaces to collaborate. This research also highlights that collaboration cannot be understood solely as a technical strategy, but as a social process that requires commitment, open communication, and institutional support. Thus, it can be concluded that collaboration between special education teachers and inclusive teachers in Aceh Province remains adaptive, not yet systematic, and not yet sustainable. The main challenges lie in coordination, professional capacity, and minimal institutional support. However, amid these limitations, local potential and initiatives have emerged that could serve as models for collaboration.

Discussion(s)

Based on the results of the scoping review of the three articles above, collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in special education schools in Aceh province has not yet demonstrated such collaboration. Specifically, teachers in inclusive education schools must be mindful of the limitations and abilities of students, both in adapting to the teaching and learning process with children. Therefore, teachers in inclusive education schools must be able to understand the psychological and psychological conditions of children with special needs. Fundamentally, all of this requires teachers to understand an inclusive culture, namely building a community by managing seven important indicators, one of which is collaboration (Haekal, 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers in inclusive schools need the assistance of special education teachers in managing the learning of children with disabilities in the classroom (Amalia & Kurniawati, 2021).

The first theme, communication and coordination between teachers, indicates that successful collaboration depends heavily on the intensity of communication between special education teachers and regular teachers. In practice, this communication is often informal and driven more by teachers' personal initiative than by structured institutional policies. Special education teachers act as consultants to regular teachers in helping adapt learning methods to the needs of students with special needs, but there is no formal, routine coordination mechanism established by the school. This finding aligns with the views of Friend & Cook (2017), who emphasized that effective educational collaboration requires a clear communication structure, equal roles, and mutual respect between professionals.

The second theme that emerged was institutional support and school policies. Based on the review, ideal collaboration between special education teachers and inclusive teachers is strongly influenced by the extent to which schools provide structural support, such as collaborative time, task allocation policies, and facilities to support inclusive learning. Two of the three articles highlighted that most schools in Aceh have implemented formal inclusion policies, but administrative support and resources remain limited. Some schools do not provide dedicated service rooms or regular meeting schedules for teachers to discuss student needs. These limitations indicate that inclusive education policies still focus on administrative aspects and have not addressed the practical implementation dimension in the field. This supports Kustawan's (2022) opinion, which states that the implementation of inclusive education requires strong institutional support for effective and sustainable teacher collaboration.

The third theme identified was teachers' professional capacity and understanding of inclusive education. The analysis revealed a competency gap between special education teachers and regular teachers in understanding the concept and practice of inclusion. Special education teachers generally possess the ability to assess individual student needs and implement adaptive learning strategies, while regular teachers often struggle to accommodate the diversity of student abilities in the classroom. This situation poses challenges to day-to-day collaboration in schools. Two of the three articles emphasized the importance of ongoing professional training and mentoring programs between teachers as a means to strengthen collaborative capacity. From the perspective of Vygotsky's theory (Daniels, 2016; Erbil, 2020), collaboration between teachers can be seen as a form of zone of proximal development for professional development, where teachers learn from each other and complement each other's knowledge through meaningful social interactions.

Teachers who are not trained in addressing obstacles in implementing inclusive education lack positive attitudes toward students with special needs. This is due to a lack of knowledge, education, understanding, or efforts on the part of teachers in assigning assignments to students, which ultimately leads to student dissatisfaction and poor learning quality (Rosita et al., 2022). Even when these real barriers are absent, teachers sometimes lack an understanding of how to effectively adapt their environments and pedagogy to be inclusive (Pandit, 2016). This demonstrates that the success of inclusive education is not solely determined by the availability of regulations or infrastructure, but also depends heavily on teachers' pedagogical competence, attitudes, and preparedness to address student diversity.

Given this phenomenon, a strategy is needed to map out models and forms of collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in schools that implement inclusive education. This collaboration can be provided by special education teachers in the form of monitoring and mentoring support (Hall, et.al., 2004). This can begin with curriculum modifications and the implementation of differentiated learning in the planning, development, teaching, and evaluation processes for students with special needs, including

designing individualized learning. One learning approach that can be implemented to support inclusive education is by developing a differentiated learning approach that favors students (Hidayat, 2024).

The implementation of this collaboration faces numerous challenges and supporting factors. In Aceh province, these challenges include formulating an inclusive curriculum appropriate for all students, classroom management, and more fundamental issues such as a shortage of teachers with special education backgrounds (Haekal, 2021). Supporting factors include the Aceh government's need to review and evaluate its 2012 policy on inclusive education, which established Aceh as one of the most inclusive provinces in Indonesia. This evaluation is crucial for identifying weaknesses, strengthening implementation strategies, and adapting the policy to new challenges facing the education sector, including the need for teacher capacity development and curriculum adaptation.

Supporting the collaborative movement between special education teachers and teachers in schools providing inclusive education is based on a culture of inclusion as the primary foundation (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Implementing an inclusive culture is crucial for ensuring the entire community understands the meaning, practices, and benefits of inclusion before implementing policies or actual implementation of the system. This is supported by two stages: first, building a community by managing seven key indicators, and second, developing an inclusive policy. As a province that has issued regulations on inclusive education, these two supporting factors for collaboration have been implemented: inclusive policies. So that the supporting factors for building a community, with the implementation of collaboration from various elements, become an urgent recommendation in increasing cooperation in special education and inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a scoping review of the three articles analysed, it can be concluded that collaboration between Special Needs School teachers and teachers in schools providing inclusive education in Aceh Province has not been optimally realized. The Aceh Provincial Government has not succeeded in building a strong culture and policies related to inclusive education, even in Banda Aceh, which should be a model. Teachers' lack of understanding of the types of children with disabilities and methods of handling them is also a barrier. Teachers in inclusive schools require the assistance of special education teachers to handle learning for children with disabilities in the classroom. A culture of collaboration is only found within Special School among fellow teachers, there is no clear collaboration between special education teachers and teachers in schools providing inclusive education. Challenges in implementing inclusive education in Aceh include difficulties in formulating an inclusive curriculum, classroom management, and a lack of teachers with a background in Special Needs Education. Supporting factors are the need for the Aceh government to review and evaluate the inclusive education policy that has been in place since 2012, as well as building an inclusive community as a foundation before implementing policies or actual implementation.

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