



## Collaboration in Inclusive Education

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**Abstract:** The implementation of inclusive education is a strategy to accelerate the nine-year compulsory education including children with special needs. The implementation has become good news for children with special needs as they can have options of schools. Collaboration is important to achieve an inclusive environment in inclusive education. Inclusive education means every child that learns and every adult who works in the environment is accepted, appreciated, and accommodated. Collaboration between teachers and the family of children with special needs is essential to support students' learning activity and secure the necessary accommodation. The collaboration between teachers and the family concerns the students' needs, goals, program, and their development, as well as provides information on their children's learning process. Headmaster holds power and authority in building and directing an inclusive environment. Nevertheless, the success of inclusive education depends on collective responsibility that can only be achieved with the collaboration of schools, professionals, parents, and government. This research was conducted using study literature.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Educatio; Collaboration; Family Communication*

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### I. Introduction

The right to education was regulated and stipulated in conventions and laws. In Indonesia, the right to education had been started by the founders of the nation long before the independence. Education is a medium and transportation of a nation and it had been established as one of the people's rights as regulated in the 1945 constitution. The right to education is legally written and becomes essential to affirm that every citizen deserves their right. It also shows the commitment of the government for the people's education, including people with special needs. The right to education, which was regulated in the law of education no 4/1950, had been perfected in law no 12/1954 about the foundations of education and teaching including special education. Today's education has been improved in both quantity and quality compared to the old days when it could only be obtained by the elites. Education now is for everyone and thus the access expansion and quality improvement have been made since the independence.

Special education for children with special needs has existed since 1901 when a special school for children with vision impairment was built. It was followed by the establishment of a school for children with intellectual disability in 1927 and a school for children with hearing impairment in 1930 which were located in Bandung. The schools were operated in a segregation system in which children with special needs were grouped according to their gender. These schools were later named Special Education School (Sekolah Luar Biasa). When the government launched compulsory education in 1984, special education elementary schools (SDLB) were instituted in every city and regency. However, the students were still segregated based on their gender. In 1886, inclusive education was founded in the form of integration which means children with special needs attended the same classroom with their normal peers and adapted to the regular system. The school did not provide special accommodation to children with special needs and they use the same curriculum, facilities, tools, and learning system as the regular ones. As consequence, children with special needs had to accept and take all the difficulties they faced in regular school. This education system was called the integrated education system that was declared in the Ministry of Education and Culture decree 002/41986 about integrated schools in Indonesia.

Along with the changing of education paradigms, the government started to introduce the idea of inclusive education in 1999 with technical support from OSLOW University. In 2001, inclusive education began to be launched in regular schools in big cities. Then in 2004, inclusive education was legally declared. The people welcomed appreciated the new idea and hence, more regular

schools opened inclusive education. They believe that inclusive education is the correct solution to get the right of children with special needs obtained.

Although many schools have already applied inclusive education, the implementation has not yet been performed precisely according to the concept of inclusive education. Several practical errors were found in the implementation such as curriculum comprehension, internal regulations, and teacher shortage. There are many issues in inclusive education to get solved that need collaboration among colleagues.

The implementation of inclusive education is a strategy to accelerate the nine-year compulsory education including children with special needs. The regulation shifted the old regulation that only allows children with special needs to learn in segregated systems and special education elementary schools to optional regular schools. Today children with special needs can attend the nearest school in their neighborhood. Inclusive education is regarded as an alternative for parents as some parents may feel embarrassed to enroll their children in special education school and the capacity of special education schools are not sufficient to accommodate them.

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia started in 1990, but it was legally declared in 2004. The Ministry of National Education issued the regulation about inclusive education in Ministry regulation No. 70/2009 which stated inclusive education aims to provide opportunities to every child with physical and mental impairments, emotional and social disorders, special talents and intelligence to have access to suitable quality education. In addition, law no. 20/2003 regulated the obligation of the government to guarantee the right of every citizen to proper education and facility of education service. Inclusive education is a solution for parents who decide to enroll their children in the nearest regular school. However, as stated by Kadji-Beltran et al., (2017), inclusive education is not provided in every regular school because it is only designated to state schools or private schools that complied with requirements. According to the data from the elementary and secondary education of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the government has assigned the implementation of inclusive education to 62.000 schools. However, the implementation has not performed correctly as some schools did not adjust the learning system for children with special needs, which made the system similar to an integrated school. This contradicted law no.70/2009 that states inclusive education provides opportunities to students with impairments and special talent to participate in education together with their peers. Moreover, the guidance of inclusive education implementation has stated that schools have to adjust their curriculum, facility, and learning system to fit with the needs of children with special needs (Directorate of Special Education 2004).

Inclusive education has been conducted for more than a decade, yet the challenges are still emerging such as 1) incorrect understanding of personnel about inclusive education 2) school has not translated the regulations into technical regulations 3) the inflexible curriculum and learning process and the insufficient quantity and quality of special education teacher 4) lack of support from parents, community, and government (handayani and rahadian 2013, sulistiadi 2016, et.al 2016 Sheskey et al., 2017).

On another note, while inclusive education may not be conducted maximally, the commitment of the government to inclusive education is persistent. It shows from several laws on inclusive education: law no.20/2003 about the system of national education, law no. 23/2003 about child protection, law no. 24 about persons with disabilities, regulation of National Education Minister no.70/2009, government regulation no. 19/2005 about standards of national education, and regulation of Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform no. 16/2009 about teacher's functional position and the credit points. These laws indicate that government takes roles in inclusive education and the responsibility is not only put upon the teachers or schools.

## **II. Collaborative Approach**

Collaboration is important for an inclusive environment in inclusive education. Inclusive education means every child that learns and every adult who works in the environment is accepted, appreciated, and accommodated. Inclusive education differs from integrated education. Inclusion is not only about treating people the same, but also providing the needs of every individual to bridge the diversity. In an inclusive education school, everyone is heard, supported, and appreciated.

Collaboration is a key for inclusive education and good collaboration will not automatically be built without maintenance and development (Friend and Cook 1996).

Headmasters hold authority and power to build and direct an inclusive education school. They can create inclusive working culture and ethics and communicate with all parties. As they need to lead and be exemplary, headmasters must be imaginative, committed, and constantly stimulate and encourage the agenda of inclusion. This also means that headmasters have to minimize the hierarchical challenges like the feeling of embarrassment to interact with the staff and students as they are obligated to create a collegial and collaborative environment.

Inclusive education involves all the students and the staff. It concerns students' needs and strives to eliminate learning and emotional challenges. The fundamental of inclusive education is to build life skills and effective learning. For this reason, every teacher of inclusive education needs to improve their professionalism in their planning and teaching, as well as have flexibility when students need help in their learning activity. In other words, the professionalism and development of teachers and staff become the key points for the success of inclusive education.

Another important element for inclusive education is collaboration with parents. It should be noted that parents are heterogeneous and may complicate inclusive education at a certain time. Nonetheless, parents' support is one of the key points to achieve a good inclusive education. Inclusive education should cooperate with the community and every element that participates in it shall reflect, listen, try, transform, adapt, and persist.

The logical consequence of inclusive education implementation in regular schools is the availability of both regular educators and special educators. The two can develop interaction to effectively collaborate in the collective planning and problem-solving and the suitable teaching delivery to promote the success of students (Hathaway, 2003). Collaboration is built through cooperation and thus only occurs when all parties involved work together. For instance, classroom learning activity is conducted in the team.

Friend and Cook (1995) characterized a successful collaboration with several indications: 1) collaboration is performed voluntary; 2) collaboration is equal for every participant; 3) collaboration is based on collective purpose; 4) collaboration depends on the collective responsibility and collective decision; 5) individuals that collaborate share their resources; 6) individuals that collaborate share their accountability.

### **III. Collaboration with the professionals**

Special education teachers must collaborate with professionals to ensure every program planned can be implemented effectively to meet the needs of children with special needs in regular school. Open collaboration may result in an exchange of expertise and perspective among them. When teachers collaborate with the professionals, they can share their understanding of the students and it will help in planning and application of effective learning. Therefore, teachers need to have good skills in communication and respect others. They also have to know the person, whom they collaborate, including their socio-economic background, language, family, and expertise. The collaboration focuses on 1) planning an instructional program for students to achieve the expected learning outcome 2) collecting data and observing the students' development.

Effective and directed collaboration needs school and local authority's support to strengthen the collective commitment, provide the professional experience, improve collaborative skills, and schedule a continual collaborative activity. In inclusive education collaboration, special education teacher is the main communicator, so they must be the model and communicate effectively.

### **IV. Family Communication**

Collaboration with the family of children with special needs is important to support students' learning activities and secure the necessary accommodation. The collaboration between teachers and parents concerns the students' needs, goals, program, and their development, as well as provides information on the process of learning. Teachers need to understand the socio-economic background, language, culture, and priority of the family and respect the family to reach good communication. Family collaboration is essential to increase their participation in decision-making

(Trunbull, 2013). The collaboration between teachers and families is significant as the families take roles and are responsible for their children's education. An effective partnership strategy becomes an important element in building collaboration. Partnership with families and professionals is not only building a relationship and sharing resources but also giving benefits directly to the students and indirectly to their families (AP Trunbull, Turnbill, Erwin, Soodak and Show Green 2010).

Trunbull et.al identified seven principles of effective partnership in teachers and family collaboration: 1) teachers and families have honest communication in a comfortable environment, 2) teachers are qualified, consistently learn and develop, and have high expectations of the students and their families, 3) teachers give wise treatment to the families, respect their culture, and affirm their students' strength, 4) teachers are committed, consistent, and appears beyond their expectation, 5) teachers recognize the strength of each member of the team, share energy with the families, and focus to cooperate with the families, 6) teachers strive to attain the best solution for their students, 7) teachers can be relied on and act for the students' benefits and share vision with the families.

## V. Conclusion

Inclusive education means every child that learns and every adult who works in the environment is appreciated. Inclusive education differs from integrated education. Inclusive education emphasizes equal opportunity in which everyone is heard and appreciated. A strong relationship is a key for inclusive education and it will not automatically be built without maintenance and development so it can be adaptable to demand and changing of needs.

Headmaster takes an important role to build a good inclusive education because they have power and authority to create an inclusive working culture and working ethics at school. Nevertheless, the success of inclusive education depends on collective responsibility that can only be achieved with the collaboration of schools, professionals, parents, and government.

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