



The Implementation of Inclusive Education at SDN 30 Palembang: Challenges and Supports

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Abstract. *This study aims to describe the implementation of inclusive education at State Elementary School (SDN) 30 Palembang, focusing on the challenges and forms of support faced in its implementation. Inclusive education is an approach that ensures all children, including children with special needs (ABK), get equal access to education in a friendly and open environment. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, the results of the study indicate that the main challenges in the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 30 Palembang were the lack of disability-friendly facilities, as well as the ongoing stigma from the community towards ABK students. Other technical obstacles are the limited ratio of ABK per class set by government policy and the lack of supporting resources. However, this study also found significant support, such as teacher training, principal involvement, and cooperation with external institutions that encourage the sustainability of inclusive education. This study concludes that the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 30 Palembang shows positive developments even though it still faces structural and social challenges. Policy strengthening, teacher capacity building, and community support are needed so that the inclusive education system can run more optimally and sustainably.*

Keywords: *Challenges, Inclusive Education, Support Systems, Support.*

1. BACKGROUND

Inclusive education is an approach that emphasizes the provision of educational services for all students, including children with special needs, in regular education units. This concept aims to create a friendly, fair, and diversity-respecting learning environment. According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education is a process of responding to the diverse needs of all students by increasing participation in learning, culture, and community, and reducing exclusion in education. In Indonesia, the implementation of inclusive education is one of the focuses in efforts to equalize quality education through regulations such as Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009 concerning

Inclusive education in Indonesia began to be formally introduced in the early 2000s as part of the government's efforts to realize fair and equal education for all children, including children with special needs (ABK). This initiative emerged as a response to Indonesia's global commitment to Education for All (EFA) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. An important milestone occurred in 2003 through the issuance of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which affirms that every citizen has the right to receive education, including children with special needs. Article 5 paragraph (2) states that "citizens who have physical, emotional, mental, intellectual,

and/or social disabilities have the right to receive special education" (Law of the Republic of Indonesia, 2003). Further implementation was carried out through the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and Potential Intelligence and/or Special Talents. This policy became the main legal basis for schools throughout Indonesia to start opening inclusive education services. Along with that, the government through the Directorate of Special Education and Special Services (PKLK) actively provided training and coaching to inclusive pilot schools to support their implementation in the field (Sunardi et al., 2011). However, the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia faces various challenges, including a lack of understanding of the concept of inclusiveness itself among educators and the community, a limited number of special assistant teachers, and minimal facilities that support child-friendly learning. A study conducted by Sunardi et al. (2011) shows that although inclusive education policies have been in place, in practice many schools are still not ready to accept children with special needs due to limited teacher competency and available facilities and infrastructure. In addition, the uneven distribution of training and support from the central government to the regions also hampers the expansion of quality inclusive education throughout Indonesia. However, inclusive education continues to progress thanks to support from various stakeholders, both from the government, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. The UNESCO report (2020) noted that Indonesia is one of the countries that is progressively developing an inclusive education system with the support of national policies and local community participation. This effort is also reflected in the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) which emphasizes the importance of access and quality education for all vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. With a strong legal basis and commitment, as well as increasing public awareness, inclusive education in Indonesia is expected to grow into a fair, adaptive system that reaches all children of the nation without exception.

SDN 30 Palembang is one of the schools that has been appointed as an inclusive education provider. The implementation of inclusive education in this school reflects the efforts of the Palembang city government in realizing equal education for all citizens. However, in practice, the implementation of inclusive education at the elementary school level often faces various challenges. As explained by Sunardi et al. (2011), the main challenges in implementing inclusive education include lack of teacher training, limited resources, and minimal support from the community.

As a pilot project for inclusive education in Palembang City, SDN 30 Palembang has shown significant progress in implementing inclusive education. This school not only focuses on academic aspects, but also on the social and emotional development of students with special needs, so that they can interact and learn together with other students in a supportive and inclusive environment. This effort is in line with the goals of sustainable development which emphasize the importance of inclusive and quality education for all.

These challenges do not only come from internal aspects of the school, but also from the social environment and policies that do not fully support the optimal implementation of inclusiveness. For example, there are still teachers who have not received special training to handle students with special needs, or school facilities that are not fully disability-friendly. This hinders the creation of a fair and effective learning process for all students. According to Booth and Ainscow (2011), the success of inclusive education is greatly influenced by the school's ability to adjust the curriculum and create a learning environment that supports the participation of all students.

Although various obstacles are faced, there are also forms of support that encourage the sustainability of inclusive education at SDN 30 Palembang. This support can be in the form of teacher training, provision of special assistants, and the active role of the principal in creating an inclusive school climate. In addition, collaboration with external institutions, such as NGOs or higher education institutions, can also contribute to improving the quality of inclusive education services at this school. This is in line with the findings of Irwanto et al. (2010) which states that cross-sector support is very important in strengthening the inclusive education system in Indonesia.

Based on this background, it is important to conduct research on the description of the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 30 Palembang. This study aims to identify the challenges faced in its implementation and the support that has been and needs to be provided. The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive description for policy makers and education practitioners in formulating more appropriate strategies for developing inclusive education, especially at the elementary school level. Thus, inclusive education can be an effective means of realizing justice and equality in education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Inclusive Education

The development of inclusive education in Indonesia is inseparable from the new paradigm of children's rights to equal and non-discriminatory education. Along with international recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities, Indonesia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) through Law Number 19 of 2011, which strengthens the state's obligation to provide inclusive education at all levels of education. This indicates a shift in approach from segregative education to a more open and participatory education system (UNESCO, 2017). The government then appointed several schools as inclusive pilot schools in various provinces to serve as pilots. This process begins with intensive training for principals and teachers, provision of a flexible curriculum, and assistance by an inclusive resource center.

Definition of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an educational approach that aims to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, can learn together in the same educational environment and receive equal educational services. According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education is a process to respond to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning, culture, and school life, and reducing exclusion in and from education. Meanwhile, Booth and Ainscow (2011) define inclusive education as an effort to increase the participation of all students in the curriculum and school culture through changes in school policies, practices, and structures. On the other hand, according to Loreman, Deppeler, and Harvey (2010), inclusive education includes providing flexible and ongoing support for learners, as well as collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community to accommodate different learning needs. The three definitions emphasize that inclusive education is not only about placing students with special needs in regular schools, but also involves transforming the education system to be fairer, more responsive, and friendly to all children.

Goals and Benefits of Inclusive Schools

Inclusive schools aim to provide equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with special educational needs, without discrimination. Inclusive education emphasizes the principles of equality, participation, and respect for the diversity of students in regular classes (UNESCO, 2009). The main goal is to ensure that every

student has access to proper education and can develop their potential optimally in a supportive and open environment. In addition, this system also aims to build a more just and inclusive society through education (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

Benefits for Students

Inclusive education provides significant benefits for all students, both special needs students and regular students. Children with special needs have the opportunity to socialize and learn in an environment that values diversity, while other students learn to understand, respect, and support their different peers (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). This environment can enhance social skills, empathy, and solidarity among students (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010).

Benefits for Teachers

For teachers, inclusive education provides opportunities for professional development through the application of varied and adaptive learning strategies. Teachers learn how to adjust their learning approaches to meet the needs of all students, including through collaboration with assistant teachers or other experts (Forlin, 2010). This situation requires creativity, flexibility, and a deep understanding of instructional differentiation and inclusive classroom management.

Benefits for Parents

Parents of children with special needs feel more valued because their children have equal learning opportunities in mainstream schools. They also feel more involved in their child's education process because inclusive education encourages collaboration between school and family (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001). Meanwhile, parents of regular students see positive values in their child's social and character development through interactions with friends from different backgrounds.

Benefits for Society

Societies formed from an inclusive education system tend to be more open, tolerant, and respectful of differences. Inclusive education is considered an important strategy in creating a just and discrimination-free society (Slee, 2011). By getting children used to interacting in an inclusive environment from an early age, they grow into adults who have high social awareness and are ready to live in a diverse society.

SDN 30 Palembang



Picture 1. SDN 30 Palembang

SD Negeri 30 Palembang is located on Jalan Sungai Tawar, Kelurahan 29 Ilir, Ilir Barat II District, Palembang City, South Sumatra Province. This school is located in a densely populated and strategic area, making it easily accessible to students from various backgrounds, including students with special needs. Its location in the middle of the city provides easy access and allows community involvement in supporting inclusive education implemented at this school. SDN 30 Palembang was appointed as a school implementing inclusive education since 2013 by the Palembang City Education Office which at that time was led by Mrs. Nuraini, S.Pd.M.Si. as the principal of the school. Since then, this school has been actively accepting and fostering students with special needs (ABK) from various backgrounds. In the 2024/2025 academic year, there were 80 ABK students registered. By 2024, the total number of children with special needs who have attended SDN 30 Palembang will reach around 435 people, and most of them are transfer students from Special Schools (SLB). Children with special needs accepted at this school consist of various categories such as mild, active, and hyperactive, each of which requires different teaching strategies. The inclusive education model applied is "full inclusion", where students with special needs study in regular classes with other students.

Table 1. Table of Children with Special Needs at SDN 30 Palembang

No	Kelas	Jenis Kelamin		Jumlah
		Laki-Laki	Perempuan	
1	I	5	4	9
2	II	5	3	8
3	III	8	5	13
4	IV	15	9	24
5	V	11	2	13
6	VI	7	6	13
Jumlah		51	29	80

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with the aim of describing in depth the implementation of inclusive education at State Elementary School 30 Palembang, including the challenges faced and the support obtained during the implementation process. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for revealing social and educational phenomena naturally in the context of inclusive schools. In addition, field observations and documentation were also used to obtain more accurate and contextual data regarding inclusive education practices at the school. Data analysis techniques were carried out qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994). The results of this study are expected to provide a real picture of the dynamics of the implementation of inclusive education at the elementary school level, especially at SDN 30 Palembang, as well as being evaluation material for the development of educational policies that are more friendly to the diversity of students.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

One of the main challenges in implementing inclusive education at SD Negeri 30 Palembang is the initial resistance from teachers and the surrounding community. When the school began to adopt an inclusive system under the leadership of Mrs. Nuraini, S.Pd., M.Si, not all teachers immediately accepted this idea openly. Some teachers felt that they were not yet ready in terms of competence or mentality to face the diversity of student needs, especially students with special needs (ABK). This doubt was exacerbated by the lack of initial understanding of the basic principles of inclusive education and how

teaching strategies can be adjusted to the individual needs of students. After the teachers were given direction from the principal and the teachers also attended training or seminars on children with special needs, the teachers were finally willing to accept inclusive schools.



Picture 2. Teachers's Activity

Another challenge arises from the social dynamics of the community that do not fully support the presence of students with special needs in public schools. There is still a stigma against children with special needs, which causes some parents to object to their children studying in the same class as children with special needs. The principal at that time had to work extra hard to provide consistent socialization, guidance, and reinforcement to teachers and parents. This effort shows that building an inclusive culture in schools is not just a technical issue, but also involves changing the attitudes and perspectives of the entire education ecosystem towards diversity.

Activities of Special Needs Students

The process of teaching and learning activities for special needs students at SD Negeri 30 Palembang is the same or there is no difference with the activities of other normal students. They are in the same class, only when the teacher has explained the lesson material to other normal students, the teacher gives special attention to children with special needs by guiding them in completing assignments or exercises given by the teacher and also for the number of questions given to students with special needs is different from the number of questions worked on by other normal students, for example, normal students work on 10 questions, while for children with special needs they can only work on 5 questions which is very good.

Not only activities in the classroom that are no different between normal children or students with special needs but also activities outside the classroom, such as playing with friends, participating in competitions held by the school, children with special needs are still included in the process.



Picture 3. Students' Activities

Obstacles in Implementing Inclusive Education

From a technical and policy perspective, a major obstacle faced by schools is the limitation in setting the ratio of students with special needs in each class. Based on monitoring results from the central government, SD Negeri 30 Palembang is required to limit the number of students with special needs to a maximum of two people per class. Before 2023, the school accepted up to 100 students with special needs, but then it had to be reduced to 80 people. This shows a mismatch between the school's capacity to accept inclusive students and the policy standards set by the government, requiring schools to make major adjustments in the student admission system.

In addition, other obstacles are the limited supporting resources, both in terms of specially trained educators, inclusive-friendly learning facilities, and administrative support. Although teacher training has been carried out in stages since the principal received training from the central government, improving teacher competence in inclusive education requires time, resources, and sustainability. This process also needs to be supported by the presence of special assistant teachers (GPK), adaptive teaching aids, and classrooms that allow flexibility in learning. Without adequate structural and operational support, the implementation of inclusive education will always face obstacles in the field.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The implementation of inclusive education at SDN 30 Palembang reflects a strong commitment to supporting equal access to education for all children, including students with special needs. Although it has shown significant progress, such as the implementation of the full inclusion model and the active involvement of the principal and teachers in developing a friendly and open learning environment, various challenges are still faced. These challenges include initial resistance from teachers and the community, limited supporting resources, and government policies that are not fully in sync with school capacity. The limited number of special assistant teachers, minimal inclusive facilities, and the need for a change in the education paradigm are obstacles that need to be addressed comprehensively. Even so, SDN 30 Palembang is still able to carry out its function as an inclusive school thanks to cross-sector support, ongoing training, and the active role of the school community.

In order for the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 30 Palembang to run more optimally, it is recommended that there be increased training and special assistance for teachers so that they have pedagogical and emotional competence in dealing with student diversity. The local and central governments need to align the policy of accepting students with special needs with the capabilities and resources available at the school, and ensure an even distribution of special assistant teachers. Strengthening supporting facilities, such as disability-friendly classrooms and adaptive teaching aids, is also very important to support an effective learning process. In addition, socialization and education to the community need to be continuously carried out in order to build an inclusive culture that values diversity from an early age. Synergistic cooperation between schools, parents, government, and external institutions is the key to creating a fair and sustainable inclusive education system.

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