The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia : Current Problems and Challenges

Baby Poernomo, MA
STIAMI - Institute of Social Science and Management
Postal Address: Jl. Pangkalan Asem Raya No. 55 *Cempaka Putih* - Jakarta Pusat 10530.
Indonesia

Abstract

Inclusive education has been agreed upon by many countries to be implemented in order to combat discrimination in education. However, the implementation of inclusive education for children with special needs in Indonesia still encountered many obstacles, both in terms of policy and public acceptance. The research was conducted in 5 provinces in Indonesia namely Jakarta, West Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, and Bali, using in depth interview and direct observation as the instruments. The interview was conducted towards12 people in each province, consist of: 2 principals, 2 teachers, 2 parents of students with special needs, 4 special needs students who attend mainstream school. Lastly, interview was conducted towards 2 government officials consists of 1 officer from Provincial Education Office and 1 from District Education Office. The total number of participants is 60. This paper offers a perspective on the problems and challenges of the implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia.

Keywords: Inclusive education, human rights, special needs

Introduction

Inclusion or inclusive education is not another name of education. Inclusive education using a different approach in identifying and trying to solve the difficulties that arise in the school. Exceptional education can be a barrier to the development of inclusive practices in schools (Stubs, 2002:38).Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia 1945 clearly and unequivocally guarantee that every Indonesian citizen has the right to education, which is emphasized in Law No. 20/ 2003 on National Education System and is also stated in the Minister of National Education Regulation No.70/2009 on Inclusive Education for students with Potential Intelligence and / or Special Talent. Besides, it is also a guarantee of the various international legal instruments ratified by Indonesia, such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), World Declaration on Education for All (1990), UN Standard Rules on the Equal Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (1993), UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), Persons with Disability Act (1997), Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Declaration on International Children's Congress (2004).

All these legal instruments want to make sure that all children, without exception, are entitled to access education. Although the concept of inclusive education has been promoted internationally for over a decade, multiple barriers to the full participation of children with disabilities in education are still found. Lack of information, combined with discriminatory attitudes towards persons with disabilities at all levels of society contributes to the continued neglect of their right to education. This partly explains the minimum rate of progress that has been made towards the enrollment and participation in the education process of children with disabilities. The factors are complex and extend beyond the boundaries of the school and classroom. It is conservatively estimated that less than 10 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region are in school.

As a commitment of the Indonesian government in implementing inclusive education for the disabled, in 2002 the government officially started pilot projects in nine provinces which have resource centers, and since then more than 1500 students with disabilities were enrolled in mainstream schools, and in 2005 the number increased to 6,000 students or 5.11% of the total number of children with special needs.

Whereas in 2007 increased to 7.5% or 15181 students in 796 inclusive schools which consists of 17 kindergartens, 648 primary schools, 75 secondary schools and 56 senior high schools.[1]

Since the commencement of inclusive education in Indonesia, appreciation from the community is extraordinary, so implementation has been growing and developing rapidly in many parts of the country. No wonder if UNESCO considers that the implementation of inclusive education for special needs children in Indonesia pledges 65% in 2015. Furthermore, to encourage the implementation of inclusive education more broadly, a national workshop was held in Bandung that produced Bandung Declaration in which the content was among others encourage the government, educational institutions, relevant institutions, business and industry and the community to ensure any children with disabilities to get equal access to all aspects of life, as well as getting humane treatment. Unfortunately, due to a variety of factors, notably the lack of government commitment and support, so that its implementation has not been running smoothly and thoroughly, so that the ranking continues to decline. In 2008, Indonesia was in the 63rd rank and in 2009 was in the 71st.[2] Currently, the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is experiencing a slump. Data in 2013 showed there were 2450 number of special schools with 89.000 students and 17.100 teachers.

However, the school enrollment rate is still low, only 34,2%.[3] Today, the goal of inclusive education is not easy to achieve. It is caused by obstacles or problems in the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, based on the above mentioned reasons, this paper intends to examine the problems encountered in its implementation and some alternative solutions can be taken.

Participants

The research was conducted in 5 (five) provinces in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, West Java, East Java, Yogyakarta, and Bali. We chose those 5 (five) provinces, as they are the most populous provinces with quite a big number of children with special needs. There were 12(twelve) participants interviewed in each province, consists of 2 (two)principals who lead the inclusive schools, in particular to obtain information about the constraints in implementing inclusive education and what policy taken by the schools to address the existing barriers, 2 (two) teachers, to dig up more information about the problems faced by them in the teaching and learning process, 2 (two) parents of students with special needs. Information obtained from the parents of children with special needs become very important because they are the people who can best identify the progress of their children from time to time including complaints over child-related issues that they have encountered in school. We also conducted interviews with 4 (four) special needs students from each province who attend mainstream schoos to find out their feeling and constraints they encountered in the process of teaching and learning. Lastly, we conducted the interview with 2 (two) representatives of Education Office, namely 1 (one) from Provincial Education Office and 1 (one) from the District Education Office.   The total number of participants is 60.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection techniques used in this study are as follows :

1) In depth Interview

The interview is a kind of conversation: a conversation with a purpose (Robson, 1993). The author chose interview because it is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out as stated by Robson (p. 229). This study used semi-structured interviews, because it allowed me the opportunity to direct the interview more closely, to have a pre-determined set of questions while simultaneously allowing the interviewees sufficient flexibility to shape the flow of information given (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). According to May (2001) the semi-structured interview gives the interviewer the freedom to probe beyond the answers in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardization and comparability. Semi-structured interviews are also used in flexible, instant, qualitative designs (Robson, 2002).

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[1]Sunaryo. 2009. Management of Inclusive Education. Bandung: UPI. Suyatno. 2012. Benang Kusut Pendidikan Indonesia, (Online). Available at: http://www.umm.ac.id/en/detail-4-benang-kusut-pendidikan-indonesia-opini-umm.html.

[2](www.kompas.com.,30 November 2009).

[3]http://d-tarsidi.blogspot.co.id/2015/11/inclusive-education-in-indonesia.html

In addition, semi-structured interview is the most effective way of interviewing, because the interviewer gets a lot of information needed for the study, as questions have been well prepared systematically. We chose an interview because we wanted to have the opportunity to ask more questions and be given if necessary explanations. It is also adaptable, flexible, and relatively unstructured and open ended. The interviewer can ask more questions, if the answer does not come up to expectations (Robson, 2002). In addition, Robson (2002) also says that it is appropriate to use the interview when the individual perceptions of processes within a social unit are to be studied.

2) Direct Observation

Robson (2002, p.191) says that a major advantage of observation as a technique is its directness. Researchers in observation do not ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes; but watch what the people do and listen to what they say. Interview and questionnaire responses are notorious for discrepancies between what people say that they have done, or will do, and what they actually did or will do (Oskamp, 1977; Hanson, 1980). Ponte (2002) says that observation can be conducted in a few forms such as a participant and non-participant observation, public and non-public observation, direct and indirect, and structured and non-structured. In a participant observation, the researcher will become a member of the group whereas with indirect observation one is observing in a more complex situation and one uses equipment to help like a camera or tape recorder. In a direct observation, the researcher can use structured observation. In this case, the researchers use structured observation in which a checklist that can make the researchers more neutral during the observation can be employed.

This is also another advantage of observation (ibid). Therefore, in this study, structured observation is employed since we had known what to observe and it allowed us to conduct systematic observation based on the aspects defined.

Validity and Reliability

As Bell (1987, p. 50) stated 'whatever procedure for collecting data is selected, it should always be examined critically to assess to what extent it is likely to be reliable and valid'. Reliability is whether a test or procedure gives similar results under the same conditions on all occasions; while validity is the extent an item measures or describes what it is supposed to do. In conventional inquiry, internal validity refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that "the determination of such isomorphism is in principle impossible" because one would have to know the "precise nature of that reality" and, if one knew this already, there would be no need to test it. In conventional research, external validity refers to the ability to generalize findings across different settings. Making generalizations involves a trade-off between internal and external validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). That is, in order to make generalizable statements that apply to many contexts, one can include only limited aspects of each local context.

Concerning reliability in observation Silverman (1993) quotes Spradley (1979) when he says that in order to improve reliability of observation, the observer should take short notes at the time; expanded notes should be made as soon as possible after each field session; a fieldwork journal to record problems' and ideas that arise during each stage of fieldwork; a record of analysis and interpretation (p. 146-147). We used triangulation in order to increase validity. In this way, we collected accounts of the teaching and learning process from a variety of angles. We did observation with the checklist of every component we observed pertaining to teaching and learning process in inclusive schools. Second, we did observation during the lessons in the classrooms in which it gave us more clearly how teachers delivered the lessons in inclusive setting. Finally, the method of 'triangulation', whereby we obtained the information not only from the interview but more than one tool was employed in this study. The above factors to an extent, ensure the validity of our study.

Triangulation technique used in this study is the triangulation of sources, and triangulation methods. First, triangulation of sources, which collects similar data from several different data sources. In this case, to obtain data on the implementation of inclusive education in schools, for example, then the data collected from interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and students. Second, triangulation method, which collects similar data or technique by using different methods of data collection. In this case to obtain the data, then used several sources of interviews, and also through observation.

Data Analysis

The technique of analysis used in this study is an interactive analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

In this analytical model, the three components of the analysis of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification activities conducted in an interactive form with the data collection process as an ongoing process, repetitive, and continuously to form a cycle.

Furthermore, researchers only move between the three components of the analysis, thus forming a cyclic pattern. Data reduction can be defined as the process of selecting, focusing on simplification, abstraction, and transformation of dummy data that emerged from the written record in the field. Thus the data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, classify, direct, dispose of unnecessary and organizing data in a way such that its final conclusions can be drawn and verified (Paton 1990).

Teachers Data

From interviews with 10 (ten) teachers in 5 (five) provinces, it is found that the teachers who taught in inclusive schools still had difficulties in formulating a flexible curriculum, and determine the objectives, materials and methods of learning. There were many teachers assume that the target curriculum for children with special needs was precisely the same as the other students. Out of the 10 (ten) teachers who were interviewed only two people who said that the learning process had been implemented in schools in the form of 'team teaching', but it remained difficult in coordination. It had not been supported by legal clarity about the role, duties and responsibilities of each teacher. Classroom teacher or special teacher still complained about the lack of facilities provided by the schools,so the use of learning media still cannot be maximized. The scoring system is also a factor that is complained of by the teachers. The absence of a clear guidance on the assessment system made the teachers uncertain to apply a flexible approach.

Until now, the teachers are still using the same scoring system both for children with special needs and the other students. Similarly, training or program to improve teachers' quality in inclusive schools is still limited both in provincial level or national level. From the interview, the data showed that all teachers agree that special teachers must have special education needs background who have been trained and have sufficient teaching experience rather than forcing classroom teachers from the mainstream schools to teach students with special needs. It is expected that the inclusive schools can collaborate with special school in recruiting teachers with special education needs background facilitated by the Provincial Education Office.

Parents Data

Research shows that up to now there are still a lot of parents who do not understand the meaning of inclusive education. Out of 10 (ten) parents of children with special needs who were interviewed, all of them said that the socialization of inclusive education is almost unheard. Thus, the parents are still anxious that their children will be the subject of ridicule when they go to mainstream schools. Lack of socialization is also impacting not only to parents of special needs children but also to the parents of normal children. A mother from Jakarta who was interviewed even said that she felt very offended hear some parents saying : "Why should a disabled child studies in this school? Disabled children should study in special schools."It is a fact that there is a lack of socialization by central and local governments.

The parents also said that until now, schools and teachers are lacking to guide their students to appreciate the differences and values of brotherhood so that children with special needs still feel being discriminated and isolated from the environment. Two mothers who were interviewed even said that before entering into inclusive schools, their children attend specialschool, and they looked very happy and had good self confidence when playing and learning with their peers.

However, after being transferred to the mainstream school (inclusive school), their children look unhappy, more frequent crying, and no longer have the confidence. The data from the interviews with special needs children parents shows that most of the special teachers provided by the mainstream school do not entirely have sufficient competence to assist children with special needs. Eight (8)parents even claimed that in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, it can be seen that the classroom teacher has very little attention to children with special needs and give full responsibility to handle the special needs children to the teacher assistant. In fact there are many teachers who think that these children havelower intellectual ability compared to normal children. That is why the classroom teachers never ask these students to perform together with their peers.

Students Data

The data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analyzes from Hycner's guidelines (1985). The Data are then delineated into units of meanings relevant to the research purpose. Barriers found across the ten schools in five provinces were categorized into the following themes: (a) environmental barriers, (b) attitudinal barriers consists of intentional attitudinal barriers and unintentonal attitudinal barriers. (Pivik et al, 2002)

Environmental barriers

Environmental barriers faced by special needs children associated with the existing facilities at the school. The main problem is that the study room which is located on the first floor, while the laboratory is on the 2nd floor. This is a barrier for children with wheel chairs to move up without lift. Two students reported that all those who use wheel chairs were first ordered to be moved to another room before the class is over: "..... but teachers often do not tolerate the time when we have not finished writing or working on assignments in class, they worry that we will spend too much time to move around." Environmental issues are also barriers that occur in restroom facilities. Toilets in many mainstream schools are not equipped with special rooms for special needs students that are wider so that students with wheel chair find a lot of problems in getting in and out. They have to ask for the help of teacher or parent when going to the restroom. Children with wheel chairs also complained that the location of the library is on the 2nd floor. "I want to go to the library and reading books in my spare time, but I feel bad when I have to ask for help to other people to lift me up. So, I rarely go to the library."

Intentional attitudinal barriers

All of the students interviewed reported instances of bullying and emotional isolation. Isolation took the form of either being ignored or having difficulty forging friendships. The students Indicated emotional attitudinal barrier that was the most hurtful included name calling, pointing, being ridiculed, being labeled as "stupid". Surprisingly, it is not done by the only fellow students but also their parents. In fact there are parents who forbid their children make friends with children with special needs. The special needs children regretted that until now, teachers seldom give understanding to all students to appreciate the differences. There are even teachers who know that there is a disabled child being bullied but they never take any action and it seems that this is not a serious problem.

Unintentional attitudinal barriers

Unintentional attitudinal barriers relate to a lack of knowledge and understanding or effort on the part of the educational system or staff. "It happens for instance in physical education classes. The teachers always treat us to keep scoring or check the students attendance rather than giving us a chance to participate in the sports activities. "It happens also during the teaching and learning session in the classroom. "If there is a session of art and culture, teachers never ask us to choose what we want to perform but they assign us to play musical instruments or sing a song rather than participate in a dance together with the oher students. Actually, we are also treated discriminatively by the teachers.

Principals Data

After conducting interviews with teachers, parents and special needs students, interviews with principals were done to gain information regarding the school policy. Extracting information to the principal focus on the obstacles faced in implementing inclusive education. Specifically for the principals, we divided the questions into 4 categories, namely: 1) inclusive education-related school policies, 2) implementation of teaching and learning, 3) human resources, 4) support system. From interviews with the principal, it shows that many schools still do not fully understand the purpose of inclusive education.

In general, inclusive education is understood as an effort to include children with special needs into the mainstream schools in order to provide access to education and fight against discrimination. 8 of 10 school principals being interviewed even said that they often meet difficulties when they should establish policies related to the needs of those children, for example related to the budget for honorary teacher assistant, support equipment, procurement of special books for the visual impared students, etc. Regarding the issues on teaching and learning process, it can be seen from the result of the intervews that children with special needs still have to adjust to the system implemented in schools, such as study hours that must be fulfilled by all students, including children with special needs. Human resource issues are also experienced by the inclusive schools.

Out of the 10 principals being interviewed, all said that they still find it difficult to train the teachers and educational staff in order to be pro-active and friendly towards all children. Teachers and staff at the schools have not been fully able to instill the values of friendship and tolerance to the learners in order to accept their friends with special needs. In the learning process, there are many teachers who do not fully understand how to teach in the classroom with inclusive settings, so that they just give the responsibility in teaching children with special needs to a special teacher or teacher assistant.

As for the four points to the support system, all heads of the schools said that until now the role of government driving the implementation of inclusion through regulation or technical assistance was considered to be less proactive and less attention to the real problems in the field. Schools generally have not supported the facilities needed to support the accessibility and successful learning adequately. Regarding parental support, the school principal stated that parental involvement as one of the keys to success in inclusive education has not nurtured well. In effect, parents are often less concerned and realistic towards their children.

Government Officials Data

After conducting interviews with teachers, parents, students, and principals, interviews with government officials were done to gain information regarding the government's policy. All Provincial Education Officers said that there have been policies from the Central Government that all inclusive schools should fulfil the standard of facilities set. However, in the implementation, it should be supervised by the District Education Office. Meanwhile, when the interview was conducted towards the District Officers, all of them said that up to the present time, not all mainstream schools which were appointed to be inclusive schools have completed the facilities needed, and they also said that they were lack of budget for the school improvement. When asked about their plan to complete these, they said that they have informed it to the provincial government but there is still no follow up.

Discussion

From the interview , we get the data that attitudinal barriers were identified by the students as the most deterious of their school experiences. All of the students have experienced these negative things from their peers . However , it is surprising that the students also said they are also experiencing attitudinal barriers from their teachers . As Rowley - Kelly (1993) stated that to ameliorate negative attitude , schools need to socialize the sensitivity and disability awareness training . This program should be conducted periodically and fully attended by teachers . They said that this program includes highlighting individual differences as well as commonalities , ensuring that students with disabilities understand that they have the right to be included , they also have a right for social acceptance.

Information about disability awareness and socialization should be gained not only by school teachers but also all parents . This is very important to avoid attitudinal barriers from students' parents. One method for acquiring specific disability awareness information is through the use of parent panels (Duckworth & Kostell , 1999) . The parent panel can be conducted in terms of meetings between parents and educational staff , in order to share information about students with disabilities and how we should educate our children to appreciate the diversity.

Provincial Education Office as well as District Education Office must have strong commitment to create inclusive schools in their regions. The most important thing is they have to understand first the meaning of inclusive education fully, so that they can implement the policy with the whole heart. They have to seriously allocate the national budget for completing the facilities of inclusive schools without any discrimination. They have to periodically evaluate whether each inclusive school has implemented the program well, provided good facilities that required by special needs children, methods of teaching provided by teachers , teacher training , as well as socialization to all parents of students in order to understand the actual meaning of inclusive education and create education without discrimination , like what was stated by the Center , Ward , and Ferguson (1991) which identifies the support needed by disabled children namely : (a) support special education teachers who have training , (b) integration aides being provided with professional training , (c) team teaching used as a mode of operation , so that assistance is not focused solely on the targeted student ; and (d) support (teacher/aide) that is approapriate to the child's needs.

Recommendation and Further Study

This research provided a snapshot of the experiences of children with physical disabilities in integrated school settings. Based on this study, we recommend that central and Provincial Governments continue in their efforts to enforce their laws pertaining to civil rights and provide the resources to meet them . Similarly , boards of schools need to develop more inclusive policies. School principals have to create inclusive school environment and ensure that all teachers , educational staff , parents and students also have had disability awareness. We do recommend that all teachers get regular training so that they have knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching methods to include children with disabilities in all learning activities . Further study is needed to examine the special needs students achievement in the mainstream schools .

Up to the present time, there has no research which discusses about this matter. Finally , in order to reflect our words , we need to provide the necessary efforts, educational policies, and resources to ensure that our values and principles are met .

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