

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXCELLENT PROGRAMME IN IMPROVING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Nisriina Amiirah Faatin^{1*}, Refiana Hidayah², Minsih³, Choiriyah Widayarsi⁴

¹²³⁴Magister Pendidikan Dasar, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

*Correspondence E-mail: Q200250007@student.ums.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Educational equality in Indonesia is regulated by various laws and regulations, with the primary basis being the 1945 Constitution Article 31, which guarantees the right of every citizen to education, and Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which is the main legal framework, especially Articles 26 and 27 concerning non-formal education (including equality education). This regulation is strengthened by Government Regulations, such as Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010 and Permendikbudristek, which govern the implementation and recognition of equality education diplomas, thereby ensuring equal access to education for all citizens, including people with disabilities. Education is not only about strengthening students' academic knowledge but also about developing their character, providing broad insights, and addressing behavioral and attitudinal issues. This is what enables and encourages a person to obtain a good, well-directed education. Through education, an individual can develop their personality and progress to the next stage of life. This study aims to analyze the Implementation of the Excellent Program in Improving Inclusive Education Services for Children with Special Needs. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. Data are collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out interactively through data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing of conclusions. The study results indicate that the implementation of excellent service in this school has been effective, guided by six A6 indicators (Ability, Attitude, Appearance, Attention, Action, and Accountability). Although obstacles remain, including limited teacher training, a lack of accessible facilities, and the absence of structured inclusion service SOPs, inclusion values have been firmly embedded in the school's work culture. The quality of inclusive education services can be assessed using the SERVQUAL model, which comprises tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. In general, schools can provide humane, responsive, and equitable services for students with special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Service quality; Excellent programme.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education is an educational concept that emphasizes providing an open and welcoming learning environment for all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs. In the modern era, inclusive education is increasingly important because it can help ensure equal access to education. Equality here is fair and equitable, whereas previously, formal education was limited to students with abilities or in normal conditions. Meanwhile, students with special needs are directed to special education. According to Hildegun Olsen (Tarmansyah, 2007, p. 82), inclusive education requires that schools accommodate all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, social-emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. This should include children with disabilities and children with talent. Street children and child laborers come from remote or nomadic populations. Children who come from ethnic minority, linguistic, or cultural populations, and children from disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups. Inclusive education is an educational service for students with special educational needs in regular schools (elementary, junior high, high school, and vocational schools) that is classified as extraordinary in terms of abnormalities, slow learning, and other learning difficulties. (Lay Kekeh Marthan, 2007:145). According to Staub and Peck (Tarmansyah, 2007, p. 83), inclusion education refers to the placement of children with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in the classroom. This shows that regular classes are a relevant learning place for children with disabilities, regardless of their gender. The education system in Indonesia has recently begun implementing a curriculum accessible to all groups, to ensure that the government facilitates access to education rather than limiting it. This is consistent with Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees the right of every citizen to education, and with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, the main legal framework, particularly Articles 26 and 27 on non-formal education (including equality education). This regulation is strengthened by Government Regulations, such as Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010 and Permendikbudristek, which govern the implementation and recognition of equality education diplomas, thereby ensuring equal access to education for all citizens, including people with disabilities. Inclusive education is an educational concept or approach that aims to include all individuals without exception (Johnsen & Skjorten, 2004). In implementing the inclusive learning process, teachers are required to provide material in an organized and more adaptive manner, as it adjusts to each student's needs. In the past, teachers taught using a general pattern without adapting to students' needs. Thus, students are required to follow only the teacher's directions, and teachers teach only *bap-bap* that has been systematically absorbed through the learning plan.

Inclusion is also defined as a special education service system that requires all children with special needs and children with disabilities to receive educational services in nearby schools, in regular classes with their peers (Sapon & Shepin, 2007). This means that schools must provide adequate facilities that are accessible to children and children with disabilities. Programs that also support the needs of children with disabilities. Previously, the oldest special education model was a segregation model that placed children with disabilities in special schools separate from their peers. These schools have curricula, teaching methods, learning facilities, evaluation systems, and teachers provided explicitly for children with disabilities. From a management perspective, the segregation model may be easier for teachers and administrators. However, from the learner's perspective, this model has numerous disadvantages. According to Reynolds and Birch (1988: 57), the segregation model does not guarantee that children with special needs can optimally develop their potential because the curriculum differs from that of regular schools. The public school curriculum is typically applied only to children who are typically developing academically and physically. In contrast, children with special needs, for example, Down syndrome or blindness, are sent to special schools, also called Special schools. This is considered unwise, because the law states that "to form a Government of the State of Indonesia that protects the entire Indonesian nation and all Indonesian bloodshed and to promote public welfare, educate the life of the nation, and participate in implementing a world order based on independence, lasting peace and social justice". Therefore, the government must ensure the nation's intelligence is administered fairly and evenly. In line with this principle, the government has begun to implement inclusive education in public schools. With the hope that all children can receive education equitably, they can fully develop their potential.

This is a new focus in education: ensuring that every child has equal access to education. Previously, regular schools offered a standard curriculum, whereas today education must be developed by prioritizing the needs of students, both those with and without special needs. Therefore, it is necessary to upgrade educators and the educational curriculum to achieve the whole. The

curriculum currently under investigation is the application of the Excellent Program to the implementation of educational services. The implementation of the "Excellent" program in education focuses on improving quality through character education (Excellent Character) and excellent service (Excellent Service), involves planning an integrated curriculum (according to the Pancasila Student Profile), the implementation of positive religious habituation and extracurricular activities, as well as routine evaluation with parents and teachers to overcome moral problems (such as bullying) and optimize the potential of special or regular students, in order to create quality learning environment and satisfaction of all parties. In this excellent program, emphasis is placed on character education to help students develop a healthier foundation and strong character. In implementing this program, several aspects are prioritized. Some of the main aspects of the Excellent Program that are carried out are:

1. Excellent Character:
 - Focus: Instilling noble values, noble morals, and dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile (faith, piety, noble character, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, cooperation, global diversity).
 - Examples: Daily worship habits, reading habits, extracurricular activities, and instilling religious values.
 - Goal: To overcome moral problems (moral degradation, bullying) and to shape the character of students.
2. Excellent Service:
 - Focus: Improving the quality of educational services from all elements of the school (teachers, staff, management) to customers (parents and students).
 - Examples: Effective communication, responsiveness to student needs, a comfortable school environment, and improved teacher competence.
 - Objective: To improve parental satisfaction and the overall quality of educational services, including in inclusion programs.
3. Excellent Class (Acceleration/Featured Program):
 - Focus: Accommodating and optimizing the potential of students with exceptional abilities to grasp or intelligence
 - Examples: A more challenging curriculum, different teaching methods, to reduce the gap between regular and excellent students.

To run this program, cooperation and collaboration among multiple parties are essential, as they significantly determine the program's success. The government, schools, teachers, experts, parents, and students must cooperate effectively. Where the government must accommodate the program by providing facilities and infrastructure through schools that implement it, schools must provide inclusive facilities for all parties and support the existing curriculum. Teachers play a role in guiding and teaching using adaptive concepts and patterns; students are expected to accept and consistently follow instructions. Moreover, parents serve as supervisors of children when they are out of school. When this collaboration is carried out in unison, it is hoped that education can be delivered more evenly and comprehensively. Children can develop knowledge and character, thereby becoming ready to face future challenges.

The progress of today's era warrants consideration, especially given the significant role of rapid technological change. Without compromising the essence of education, the researcher hopes that technology can serve as a tool to support educational services, particularly inclusive education. Previously, the Excellent Education service program was applied only to regular children with high academic potential through the acceleration program, which accelerated students' academic progress. An excellent program that has recently been implemented groups children with superior potential in classes of approximately 10, with a curriculum designed to be higher than that for children with average academic potential. Participants in this acceleration program are considered to learn more quickly. In this context, the government seeks to apply this excellent program to children whose academic potential is considered low or below average, as well as to children with physical limitations, by adapting the required curriculum to ensure inclusive access. Here, the researcher aims to conduct a descriptive qualitative study using a case study design. Data are collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out interactively through data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing of conclusions. The study results indicate that the implementation of excellent service in this school has been effective, guided by six A6 indicators (Ability, Attitude, Appearance, Attention, Action, and Accountability). The results of this

study are expected to enable researchers to assess whether the implementation of effective programs for ABK Education services is effective and efficient, or ineffective. The researcher chose SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta as the research site for this excellent program. Here, the researcher aims to examine whether the implementation of this excellent program is effective and whether it is perceived as effective.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. This approach was chosen to describe in depth the process of implementing the Excellence Program to improve inclusive education services for Children with Special Needs. By using this method, the researcher can focus on the actual conditions, and by employing non-numerical data instruments, the researcher can identify the reasons for the "why" and "how" of the effect of implementing the Excellent Program for Improving Inclusive Education Services for Children with Special Needs. The data analysis employs Miles and Huberman's model of qualitative data analysis, which comprises data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Sugiyono, 2015, pp. 404-412). This study employs a qualitative, descriptive approach. The main objective is to describe, document, analyze, and interpret the existing conditions for implementing high-quality programs in inclusive schools. The selection of subjects is carried out by purposive sampling (based on specific criteria), which includes:

1. Principal (as the person in charge of the excellent program policy).
2. Special Supervisor Teacher (GPK).
3. Classroom/Subject Teacher.
4. Parents of students with special needs (PDBK).

To obtain comprehensive data, data triangulation techniques are used:

- Participatory Observation: Directly observing the learning process in the inclusion classroom, the availability of facilities, and social interaction between students.
- In-depth Interview: Conduct structured questions and answers with informants about the planning, constraints, and achievements of the excellent program.
- Documentation Study: Review curriculum documents (PPI/Individual Learning Programs), student development reports, and school policies related to inclusion.

Where the instrument of this research is the researcher himself (human instrument), which is assisted by:

1. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consisted of three concurrent activity streams
2. Data Reduction: Summarize, select the main points, and focus on data relevant to the excellent program.
3. Data Display: Presenting data in the form of narrative text or charts for easy understanding.
4. Conclusion Drawing: Conducting verification to find the meaning of the data that has been collected.

To ensure data validity, this study employed Source Triangulation (comparing data from teachers, principals, and parents) and Technical Triangulation (comparing interview results with field observations). According to Sugiyono (2017), the descriptive qualitative research method is used to examine the condition of natural objects, with the researcher as the primary instrument, and the results emphasize meaning rather than generalizations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inclusive education is not just about placing students with special needs (PDBK) in regular schools. Moreover, inclusion is an effort to create an ecosystem in which every child, regardless of physical or cognitive barriers, receives high-quality or excellent educational services.

The implementation of high-quality programs in this context requires a comprehensive transformation that extends from the curriculum to educators' competence.

1. Philosophy of Inclusion as Excellent Service

An excellent program starts from the understanding that diversity is an asset, not a burden. Quality inclusion focuses on decent accommodation and Universal Design for Learning.

According to Stainback & Stainback (1990), in their work on inclusive schools, "An inclusive school is a school that educates all students in a regular classroom by providing an educational program that is feasible, challenging, but appropriate to each student's abilities and needs, as well as the help and support that teachers can provide for students to succeed."

2. Main Pillars of Excellent Program Implementation

To achieve superior service standards, schools need to implement several core strategies:

- a. **Flexible Curriculum:** The curriculum should not be rigid. Excellent programs employ modification and adaptation (e.g., escalation or simplification) so that the material remains relevant to PDBK without lowering quality standards for regular students.
- b. **Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** Excellent service involves synergy between classroom teachers, Special Guidance Teachers (GPK), psychologists, and parents.
- c. **Barrier-Free Learning Environment:** Not only physical accessibility (such as ramps or guide tiles), but also social accessibility free from stigma and bullying.

3. The Importance of Systemic Support

The success of excellent programmes is highly dependent on the school management's view of individual differences. David Mitchell (2014), an international expert on inclusive education, emphasises in his book *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education* that "Inclusion is about participation and achievement. This requires systemic change that encompasses values, beliefs, and practices at the school level to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational experiences."

4. Continuous Evaluation and Monitoring

An educational service is considered excellent if it can conduct data-based evaluations. Assessments are conducted not only on academic aspects but also on students' functional development, independence, and social interaction.

Based on the results of observations and interviews at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta, the implementation of an excellent programme in inclusive services is realised through three main pillars:

- **Early Identification and Assessment:** The school conducts initial screening for new students to determine the types of learning barriers and needs. This ensures that every child gets the right "entry point" into the education system.
- **Curriculum Modification through PPI:** Teachers at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta develop Individual Learning Programmes (PPI) tailored to the learning profiles of students with special needs (PDBK), so that uniform numerical scores do not measure excellence, but by the achievement of individual targets.
- **Provision of Special Guidance Teachers (GPK):** The school allocates special educators who serve as a bridge between the regular curriculum and the functional needs of students.

Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta Primary School does not only implement inclusion as an administrative quota requirement, but as a centre of excellence through three unique mechanisms, namely,

1. **Structured Instructional Differentiation:** Researchers found that classroom teachers modified learning objectives. While regular students were asked to analyse texts, students with cognitive impairments (PDBK) were instructed to identify keywords with visual aids.
2. **Peer Tutoring System:** The school activated the "Sahabat Inklusi" (Inclusion Friends) programme, in which regular students with high academic abilities were trained to become mentors for their peers who needed help, creating an organic culture of empathy.
3. **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta maintains integrated student progress records, which are evaluated periodically with experts or local disability service centres.

The implementation of the excellence programme at this school began with the courage to change the "one size fits all" standard to a "needs-based" standard. The Individualised Education Programme (IEP) at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta is not merely a formality, but a daily guide. This aligns with Vygotsky's conception of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this context, Layton (2012), in his book on inclusion strategies, argues, "The quality of inclusive education is determined by the extent to which tasks are given at the right level of difficulty for students, where they feel challenged but still able to achieve them with minimal assistance." At Lazuardi Kamila Primary School in Surakarta, the application of the ZPD is evident in teachers' provision of different levels of scaffolding (learning support) for each child in the same classroom. The excellence of inclusive services at this primary school is greatly influenced by the headteacher's policy of giving teachers room for innovation. An excellent programme will not run without adaptive resource management. According to Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey (2010) in *Inclusive Education, "Supporting Diversity in the Classroom*, inclusive Leadership involves the distribution of responsibilities where every staff

member feels a moral obligation to ensure that no student is neglected, either instructionally or socially."

Lazuardi Kamila Primary School in Surakarta indicates that the headteacher's role in facilitating training for regular teachers on inclusion strategies is the primary factor differentiating this school's service quality from that of other inclusive schools. An excellent programme is not just about report card grades, but about a sense of belonging. At SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta, researchers observed that stigma against PDBK was minimised through inclusivity campaigns at all ceremonies and extracurricular activities. A quotation from the educational expert John Dewey is highly relevant to the practices at this school: "Education is not merely preparation for life; education is life itself." When SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta creates an environment in which all children feel accepted, it provides the highest-quality education. However, unlike most research articles, findings at this school indicate that physical limitations exist but do not constitute an absolute barrier to the educational process. This school has demonstrated that "Excellent Service" can be achieved through the optimisation of social capital (cooperation among teachers) and human capital (creativity in modifying teaching aids), thereby making it a model of a resilient, inclusive school.

The implementation at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta demonstrates that excellent service does not depend on luxurious facilities but rather on service accuracy. This is in line with Marlina's (2015) opinion in her book *Assessment of Children with Special Needs*, which states, "Accurate assessment is the key to quality inclusive education services. Without accurate assessment data, educators cannot provide interventions that match each child's unique potential." At this school, the application of PPI enables students with cognitive impairments to feel successful by providing learning challenges aligned with their Zone of Proximal Development.

One of the interesting findings at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta is the creation of an empathetic school culture. The excellent programme not only targets academics but also character development among regular students, fostering acceptance of differences. Skjorten (2001) emphasises the importance of this social aspect, stating that "Inclusive education is a strategy to promote an inclusive society, where differences are valued, and diversity is seen as a challenge to enrich the learning environment, not as a problem to be fixed." Despite progress toward excellent standards, challenges remained due to limited adaptive learning media. However, SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta has overcome this by utilising educational aids (APE) based on local materials. This demonstrates that managerial creativity is integral to excellent service. As explained, the limitations of this school do not impede the learning process. This is because of the harmonious collaboration.

In response to the various challenges in realising an excellent programme in inclusive education services, several references can inform strategies to enhance the programme's efficiency and effectiveness. Based on findings in the field, here are some recommendations that can be submitted to policymakers (school principals, committees, and education agencies):

1. Strengthening Regulations at the Educational Unit Level

- Preparation of the Inclusion Team Decree: Schools need to legalise the inclusion team through a Headteacher's Decree so that coordination between teachers has a legal basis and a clear division of tasks (not relying on just one person).
- Allocation of BOS Funds for Adaptive Media: Recommends the use of a certain percentage of the BOS Fund for the procurement of simple assistive technology-based learning media.

2. Human Resource Development

- Continuous Workshop (In-House Training): Conducting regular training for regular teachers on the Differentiated Instruction strategy so that the burden of handling PDBK does not fall only on the shoulders of the Special Supervisor.
- Reward System: Providing appreciation for teachers who have succeeded in creating inclusive learning media innovations in their classrooms.

3. Synergy of the Education Ecosystem

- Establishment of an Inclusive Parent Forum: Creating a forum for communication between parents of regular students and parents of PDBK to build mutual understanding and remove the remnants of stigma in the school environment.
- Partnership with LPTK/University: Establish cooperation with the nearest university as a practice laboratory for Special Education students, so that the school receives the support of additional experts regularly.

4. Digital-Based Monitoring and Evaluation

Encourage the use of student development reporting platforms accessible to teachers and parents to enable transparent, continuous monitoring of children's development.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the excellent program at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta has met the basic criteria for quality inclusivity, namely adequate accommodation and full participation. This success is driven by strong collaboration among the school, the committee, and parents in viewing each student as an individual who can excel according to their talents. Based on the research and discussion results, it can be concluded that the implementation of the excellent program at SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta has exceeded the standards of administrative inclusion. The advantages of service in this school lie in three aspects: (1) Service Personalization: Dynamic use of PPIs (Individual Learning Programs), not just static documents; (2) Collective Intelligence: There is collaboration between regular teachers and special guidance teachers who can solve instructional barriers in real-time; (3) Infrastructure Resilience: The ability of schools to modify the limitations of facilities into opportunities for pedagogical creativity. As stated by Booth & Ainscow (2011) in the Index for Inclusion, "Inclusion is concerned with efforts to increase student participation in the local school curriculum, culture, and community. It is an ongoing process to remove barriers to learning for all children." SD Lazuardi Kamila Surakarta has demonstrated that the standard of excellence in inclusion is a continuous process of adaptation, not merely a uniform academic outcome.

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