



## The Inclusive Education Program in Jambi: Voices from Insiders

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### Abstract

This study was aimed at exploring the inclusive education programs developed by the government including inclusion-education curriculum, special mentor recruitment, and infrastructure facilities in the schools. The study used a qualitative method with a case-study tradition. The data were collected through interviews with 8 informants, 5 classroom observations, and documents at one elementary school. The interview data were analyzed using within-case and cross-case analyses among informants. The observational data were recorded and presented in accordance with the themes of the interview results and document data were used as the comparison. The results revealed that there were no new student admission preparation, and lack of government attention on infrastructure. The presentation of the data also included the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education. Suggestions and implications for schools in the implementation of inclusive education and the government are discussed.

### Keywords

Educational policy, elementary school, inclusive education

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## **Introduction**

Countries around the world recommend that every child has the opportunity to go to public school, but in reality many children, especially children with disabilities, are denied this opportunity (UNICEF 2013). This is especially true in developing countries. For example, in 2005 it was estimated that less than 10% of children with disabilities had access to all forms of education in Southeast Asian countries (Ainscow, 2005; Chapman & Sarvi, 2017).

This situation can be attributed to a variety of reasons, such as the involvement of several ministries and non-government stakeholders in supporting persons with disabilities, limited efforts are made to ensure the existence of cultural aspects of the recognition of persons with disabilities (Mittler, 2012; Sharma & Ng, 2014). Even so, countries in Southeast Asia continue to advance by developing educational programs or inclusive schools.

Evaluation analysis is very important. Lastuti and Jaedun (2014) state that evaluation of programs is very crucial because groups or individuals want to know about a progress or effectiveness program. The principal of one Jambi elementary school said that even though the school was directly appointed by the regional government as an inclusive school, in reality the school did not receive special attention from the government regarding its appointment as an inclusive school. In addition, the school also does not hold a decree on its designation to implement inclusive education in accordance with the ability of the school. The following is an excerpt from the initial interview with the principal, "The implementation of inclusive education policies continues even though the schools have not implemented inclusive education according to the standards set by the government, namely the curriculum, qualified teachers, and facilities".

The lack evaluation on inclusive educational policy leads us to conduct this study with three research questions: 1) How the policy of inclusive education is related to the curriculum, 2) How is the policy for the teacher recruitment, and 3) How is the policy affected by the school infrastructure.

## **Literature Review**

Inclusive education is if all students, regardless of any factors they face, are put together in similar educational institutions within their neighborhood schools to receive high quality teaching and education enabling them to meet success in the core curriculum (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Bui, Quirk, Almazan, & Valenti, 2010). The school focuses on the premise that students with special needs are as competent as students without disabilities. Therefore, all students can be full participants in their classrooms. Much of the movement is in relation to the legislation that students receive their education in the least restrictive condition (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Bui et al., 2010; Dupuis, Barclay, Holms, Platt, Shaha, & Lewis, 2006; Ferguson, 2008).

Successful inclusive education was conducted primarily through accepting and understanding student differences, which can contain cognitive, academic, social, and emotional characteristics. In addition, the students never need to use their time for regular education classes, because in many occasions, they do for a very particular purpose, for



example, for speech therapy (Petrie, Devcich, & Fitzgerald, 2018). But the purpose is this should be the exception. The principle is to have all students feel comfortable, welcomed, challenged, as well as supported in their efforts. It's also important the adults are supported, too (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Hornby, 2015).

In Indonesia, inclusive education is formally defined as an education service system that includes children with special needs learning together with their peers in regular schools closest to where they live. David (2009) argued that the word inclusion comes from English, which is inclusion, the latest term used to describe the unification of children with disabilities in school programs. In Asia, the implementation of inclusive education requires schools to adjust both in terms of curriculum, infrastructure as well as teaching staff tailored to the needs of students (Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Wu-Tien, Ashman, & Yong-Wook, 2008).

In particular, one of the education policies issued by the government through the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, in Ministerial Regulation (*Permendiknas*) No. 70 (2009) is the inclusive education. Inclusion is education for students who have abnormalities and have potential intelligence or special talents; through inclusion education, a student is educated together with other children (normal) to optimize their potential.

Inclusion education as an educational service system requires that all children with disabilities be served in the closest schools, in regular classes together with their friends (Winter, 2006). The policy popularized by Anderson (2015) who is an American educational policy expert and Professor at the University of Miami, Oxford, Ohio. The concept of this policy will be related to inclusive education in accordance with research topics and the concept of inclusive education that researchers take from various sources that relate to inclusive education, especially those related to the curriculum, teaching staff, and infrastructure.

There are many shortcomings in the implementation of educational policy in Indonesia, including in Jambi City (Sofwan & Habibi, 2016). In Jambi City, inclusion education began in 2006 (Isabella, Emosda, & Suratno, 2012). Over time, many of the shortcomings are seen in its implementation relate to the successful components of inclusive education policies. The lack of attention from the government making schools to carry out inclusive education using their own ways.

## **Methodology**

The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a case study approach. Johnson and Christensen (2008) stated that qualitative research methods are methods that prioritize meaning and understanding process; therefore the product of qualitative research is richly described. We used interviews, observations, and documents as data collection techniques as well as the demographic questionnaire to record their background. In this study, samples and informants included some job positions involved in the policy implementation. The informant data in this study are presented in Table 1.

The credibility of the data or the validity of the data in qualitative research is very important so that there is no bias with the entry of the data (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this study, to maintain the credibility of the data, we conducted



interviews with various parties involved in this study between 30 to 45 minutes and if necessary we extended the time of the interviews. Data triangulation was done through the comparison of the observation, interviews, and documents data. In this study, member checking was also conducted. Interview data that had been transcribed were validated by participants.

**Table 1.** *Participants' profiles*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
P1	Principal
P2	Class teacher
P3	Subject teacher
P4	A parent
P5	A parent
P6	Students with special needs
P7	Students with special needs
P8	Students with special needs

In the analysis phase, all collected data were entered into a computer database in a file format for the access data. Data from the interviews were analyzed by transcribing individually and coding (to divide the data into themes). Likewise, the document data were described for each document by following the pattern of data analysis of the interview results. Demographic data from the participants were described and presented individually. The themes of the analysis followed by significant statements from the participants were used to narrate the results.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The results of this study were divided into several themes to facilitate the description, namely the inclusive education curriculum, teacher recruitment, and infrastructure. Students who need special education services must obtain additional learning support within the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum. In *Permendiknas* Number 70 of 2009 concerning Learning Planning in Inclusive Schools, teachers must develop learning tools (syllabus and lesson plans) by considering individual differences. Article 8, learning in inclusive education considers the principles of learning that are tailored to the learning characteristics of students.

Presentations of material content in learning are by utilizing various learning resources and teacher assistance readiness as well as applying flexibility in learning time and in the learning process in collaboration with related parties such as parents / guardians, communities, resource persons, teachers, paramedics, therapists, and business world (Winter, 2006).

***Inclusive education curriculum:*** *“There is no special attention from the local government to the specific curriculum for the inclusive school.”*



Based on observations, all students with special needs learn by using the 2013 Curriculum. However, sometimes adjustments are made to accommodate the needs of all students with special needs. The same was revealed from the following two interview quotations.

"This school currently uses the 2013 curriculum and from 2006 has accepted students with disability or become inclusive schools. In learning activities related to the curriculum, the government gave it entirely to the school; curriculum and activities development in accordance with their interests and talents and schools submit to classroom teachers to adjust learning methods so that learning activities can run smoothly. There is no special attention from the local government to the specific curriculum for the inclusive school "(P1).

"In this school, the 2013 curriculum is valid used for students with disability or special need; learning materials are also reliable and valid" (P7).

In the guidebook for organizing inclusive education, the curriculum used in the implementation of inclusive education basically adapts a regular curriculum that applies to public schools. In the implementation of the regular curriculum, it is necessary to modify it in such a way that it fits the needs of students because obstacles experienced by students with special needs vary greatly, ranging from the beginner, and moderate to severe.

"In school learning activities involving inclusion student curriculum still follows the principles of schooling, namely, it is only in the classroom that it is left entirely to the class teacher who adjusts the learning method with the students so that they can participate" (P2).

All factors related to curriculum adjustment are also things that must be considered in the implementation of inclusive schools in Indonesia. As suggested by one of the participants,

"There is no special curriculum from the government and school. So, the school continues to use the current curriculum applied in our school in teaching students with special needs. In addition, the provision of material must be simplified so that the students can learn" (P2).

***Teacher recruitment:*** *"There are no special [needs] teachers who are employed as permanent teachers in our school..."*

Educators and education personnel in education units that administer inclusive education must have learning competencies for students in general and those with special needs. Every education unit providing inclusive education is required to have a special supervisor. According to the general guidebook for implementing inclusive education, educators should be professional who have the main task of educating, teaching, guiding,



directing, training, and evaluating students in schools that are assigned to implement inclusive education programs.

Educators include: class teachers and subject teachers. Inclusive education standards according to Government Regulation Number 23 of 2013 concerning National Education Standards, article 1 paragraph 5-7 is the National Standard of Education includes content standards, process standards, graduate competency standards, educator and education standards, facilities and infrastructure standards, management standards, financing standards, and educational assessment standards. Based on the results of observations, there is no special readiness in accepting students with special needs at the school. The same thing was agreed to by one participant,

"There are no special teachers who are employed as permanent teachers in our school to educate the students [with special needs]. We went as far as the classroom teacher and at the same time became the teacher for the students. The school and government never have plans to recruit teachers especially for the students"(P 4).

**Infrastructure:** *"There is no difference and there is no special room for the students with special needs."*

Infrastructure contained in the education unit administering inclusive education are supporting facilities that already exist in the school concerned and added accessibility and learning media for students with special needs. Besides using infrastructure such as those used by regular students, students with special need should be served with special education services; it is also necessary to use special infrastructure and equipment in accordance with the types of disorders and needs of the students. According to the guidebook for the implementation of inclusive education, inclusive education facilities and infrastructure are hardware and software used to support the successful implementation of inclusive education in certain educational units.

All in all, all educational facilities and infrastructure in a particular education unit can be used in the implementation of inclusive education aimed to optimize learning process. The school needs to be equipped with accessibility for the smooth mobilization of children with special needs, as well as learning media appropriate to the needs of the students. Infrastructure in the school did not meet the standards set by the government for inclusive schools as seen when we observed the school. This was also approved by two informants in the interview,

"All rooms in this school can be used by all students. There is no difference and there is no special room for the students with special needs. There are no special facilities for them according to their specific needs. Students with special needs should get facilities and infrastructure that can facilitate them to attend the teaching and learning process in classes and activities outside the classroom" (P1).

Schools should also have special spaces for the students or those who need assistance such as counseling rooms; however, this has not been prepared by the school. This led to a long journey for the school to become good and quality inclusion schools. Fowler (2014) and



Anderson (2015) stated that the main requirement for an education problem to be overcome is that the issue must be an important agenda for policy makers. The fact obtained from the field contradicts the statement above. The Indonesian government as a policymaker does not provide a clear direction for inclusive education in Jambi. Therefore, the school still implements the policy of inclusive education in schools according to the ability of the school in terms of the curriculum. In another word, no special treatment for students with special needs,

“In this school, there are no available facilities in the form of tools to help student with special needs learn that are different from other students in terms of classroom learning because the school has no money to buy the tools. In addition, there is no government assistance; however, the students can still attend the class”(P5).

The findings of this research are almost the same as that of Isabella, Emosda, and Suratno, (2012) that concluded that the implementation of inclusive education aimed at meeting the needs of students. In terms of good criteria, with 68.35% of the sub-indicators of the implementation of inclusive education in schools benefiting, there are some parts that support programs that are not yet in line with the standards. In this study, it was found that several things support the implementation of inclusive education policies did not meet the standards.

The results of the Irenawati and Aman's (2007) study informed that the implementation of inclusive education depends on the willingness of the school. Inclusive education can be organized if the school is ready for the infrastructure and human resources. This is the same as the findings that we discovered in this study where the implementation of inclusive education can be done because of the willingness to accept students with special needs without coercion from the government because the government has never forced a school to carry out the policy inclusive education. Fuadi's research (2011) reported that first, inclusive education held in Indonesian capital city (Jakarta) tends to describe the unification of children with special needs the school program. Although the students with intelligence and / or special talents are also included in one of the inclusive education students, their existence is not much an issue in the implementation of inclusive education.

Second, the implementation of inclusive education does not use the model as found in the literature and general provisions of inclusive education. The model is only part of the strategy that the teacher needs to know and implement. Viewed from the perspectives of educational policy, the results of this study revealed that schools accepting students with special needs have not had any preparation to make special curricula, recruit teachers for the students and provide quality infrastructures facilities that are not yet in line with government standards for inclusive schools where the first step in implementing a policy is the agenda setting (Anderson, 2015; Fowler, 2014).

This can be seen from the results of interviews regarding the inclusive education curriculum for students with special needs. The government, the education office, fully recommends the school to have their own policy. Schools applying the 2013 Curriculum must be ready to accept students with special needs. Freedom to use the curriculum for students with special needs gives the impression that the school does not prepare the school



to become an implemented place of inclusive education which is expected to meet the standard. P1 revealed that the curriculum in the school was the 2013 Curriculum that force schools to accept students with special needs; no established policy to be a host school for students with special needs.

Fulfilling the needs for special teachers for students with special needs is not easy. As a school with a policy of accepting students with special needs, the school had no special teachers. This happened because the absence of formulation regarding recruitment policies. Judging from inclusion education policy theory, schools should pay attention to adjusting the number of the teachers in inclusive schools. The school should also have a counselor as a teacher who can help other teachers regarding the treatment for the students and in developing their potential. Counselor teachers can be the information center needed by the teachers or parents for their betterment. This is very important in making quality inclusive education schools according to government's standards. Data from the interview show that the programs to improve teachers' ability in schools have not become an important agenda for the school.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Based on the analysis and discussion of the research data presented, it was concluded that in the implementation of inclusive education policy in the school where this study was conducted, there was no special preparation by the school to become an inclusive school in accepting students with special needs. The school only prepares teachers to have willingness in teaching students with special needs and schools implement inclusive education policies that are running as they are (not yet according to government standards), so as to have an impact on the curriculum used for the students. In this case the government gives full freedom for the school to self-modify the existing curriculum so that it can be adapted by the students. The school used the 2013 Curriculum to be a guideline in providing learning materials to all students including students with special needs. There is no special curriculum or modified curriculum according to the special needs of the students in the school. In terms of special teachers' recruitment, the school has never done any recruitment process because the school does not have funding to finance the salary of the teachers. The government did not provide financial assistance to inclusive schools to pay the teachers.

In addition, in terms of facilities and infrastructure, there is no specific difference between regular students and students with special needs in the teaching and learning process in classes and activities outside the classrooms. To deal with three major issues (inclusion-education curriculum, special mentor recruitment, and infrastructure) found in this study, the central and local governments should formulate sound policies regarding the needs of students with special needs. Particularly, there should be differentiated between what students with special needs and regular students need in terms of inclusion-education curriculum, special mentor recruitment, and infrastructure. The central and local governments should not let schools with students with special needs struggle alone dealing with the needs of students with special needs. For researchers, research on the issues of inclusive education remains limited. Therefore, the central and local governments should work together with universities to find sound solutions for dealing with students with special needs through collaborative research across the country.



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