

Vol. 6, No. 3, September 2018

p-ISSN: 2338-8617

e-ISSN: 2443-2067

*Jurnal Ilmiah*

# PEURADEUN



**JIP**  
The International Journal of Social Sciences  
[www.journal.scadIndependent.org](http://www.journal.scadIndependent.org)  
DOI Prefix Number: 10.26811



ACCREDITED "B" by the Ministry of Ristekdikti  
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**Educational Revitalization of the Children with Special Needs at an Inclusive School**

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Article in Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun

Available at : <http://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/214>

DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v6i3.214>

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**Published by: SCAD Independent**

SCAD Independent is an independent research  
institute on democracy in Aceh, established in 2010  
with the Notary Deed No. 01, dated 29 October 2012.



## EDUCATIONAL REVITALIZATION OF THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

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**Received:** Dec 8, 2017

**Accepted:** April 21, 2018

**Published:** Sept 28, 2018

**Article Url:** <http://journal.scadIndependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/214>

### Abstract

*The main purpose of this research is to find out the forms and meaning of revitalization of children with special needs at an inclusive school, particularly at Saraswati Elementary School, Tabanan, and Bali. This research is a qualitative research with an approach of a Cultural Study. The results show that the forms of revitalization are increasing resources, such as the workshop of teachers and students parents; providing apprentice for school staff, especially the manager of school library; increasing the involvement of children with special needs with the other common peers in self-development; equipping facilities such as special guidance room and library facilities. The meaning of revitalization is to improve the quality of human resources, togetherness in differences, and the development of potential children with special needs. In conclusion, there are enhancement of knowledge, skills, and behavior of teachers and educational staff respectively with the average of 88 and 90 percent, parents become more empathetic to the children, and social cohesion between children with special needs and normal children is established, so children with special needs are able to grow well.*

**Keywords:** *Revitalization, Inclusive Education, Children with Special Needs*



## **A. Introduction**

Education for all is a global anti-discrimination issue accepting children's diversity in togetherness through inclusive education. Inclusive education includes all children together in atmosphere and learning process with appropriate educational services and in accordance with individual needs of learners without discriminating children coming from the differences of ethnic background, social conditions, economic, political, family, language, geography, sex, religion, physical, mental/intellectual, social, emotional, and behavioral.

Education for children with special needs is generally done in special schools. The existence of special school is limited with an average of one school in each regency/municipality. Meanwhile, the numbers of children with disabilities are relatively large and spread to remote villages. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics 2017, the numbers of children with special needs in Indonesia reach 1.6 million whereas children that obtained inclusive education services were only 18 percent (Mi'raj Islamic News Agency, 2017). This condition effected many children with special needs have not been able to obtain special education.

One way for disabled children to attend school and to study with normal children of the own age is through inclusive education, such as education implemented at Saraswati Elementary School Tabanan, Bali. The school is a relatively new private school that carries out an exclusive education. It is based on the decision letter of Department of Education Youth and Sports Tabanan Regency No.181 /530/Disdikmudora dated on July 12, 2011 concerning the permission to open inclusion class.

In 2017, the number of children with special needs that attend inclusive education in the school are 18 students or 1.75 percent of the number of normal students reaching 1026 students. Kinds of students disabilities including autism, hyperactivity, mild mental disability, slow learning, difficulty speaking, and harelip are scattered in class I to class VI. School principal and teachers have relatively limited knowledge, skills, and experience of inclusive education consisting of school management, inclusive classes, learning processes and inclusive

assessments. The facts cause the implementation of inclusive education in schools has not run optimally. In consequence, the implementation of inclusive education in the school needs to be revitalized.

The main obstacle for children with special needs to progress is not on the disabilities. The obstacles can be overcome by the availability of special tools and handling. Precisely, the most difficult obstacle faced is social barrier. In fact, the cases which obstruct come from inside the own self due to negative social views on the children. Susilo (2012) states that the development of children with special needs are necessary to get supports of the people around. The students with special needs are very ideal to study in inclusive schools than special schools. The research of the American National Academy of Sciences in 1980 found that the classification and placement of children with disabilities in schools, classes or special places are ineffective and discriminatory (Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Khusus dan Layanan Khusus Pendidikan Dasar, 2015: 18).

Therefore, inclusive education should be urgently revitalized and developed. The experts of critical education, such as Freire (2007: xiii) states that education is for liberation, not for domination. Fakhri (via O'neil 2008: xvi) defines that education is re-humanizing human beings who are dehumanized due to unfair systems and structures. Soyomukti (2010: 482) argues that education should be able to release human beings from the fetter of injustice and oppression, as children with special needs of the educational process are separated from normal children in extraordinary schools/special schools.

## **B. Method**

The method used was qualitative research method with approach of Cultural Study. Informants determination were done by the techniques of purposive and snowball. The key informant was the principal and other informants were the teachers, students parents, education staff, and students. The data were collected by utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document studies. Test data validity was done by triangulation technique (Bungin, 2009). The main instrument of



this research was the researcher by using interview guides, recording devices, and camera. The data were analyzed by qualitative descriptive analysis including data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion, and verification. The analysis was open ended with the data in the field. The researcher interpreted the data by using interpretative approach, with the result that new meaning was obtained. The analysis results were presented narratively and in the form of table and photos.

**C. Research Finding**

The numbers of children with special needs at Saraswati Elementary School, Tabanan in 2017, were relatively small which showed 1.75 percent towards 1026 normal or common students. The types of students disabilities consist of autism, hyperactive, mild mental disability, slow learning, difficulty speaking, and harelip. The disabilities were caused by congenital. According to Atik (2013:18), the factors that cause special needs for children are personal or biological factors.

The comparison of children with special needs with common children that studied at Elementary School Saraswati Tabanan can be observed as follows.

*Table 1: The Comparison of Children with Special Needs and Common Children at Elementary School Saraswati Tabanan in 2017*

| No           | Class | The Number of Students |                             | Kinds of Disabilities           | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
|              |       | Common Students        | Children with Special Needs |                                 |                |
| 1            | I     | 149                    | 4                           | Autism,hyperactive, and harelip | 2.68           |
| 2            | II    | 184                    | 2                           | Autism                          | 1.08           |
| 3            | III   | 161                    | 3                           | Slow learning                   | 1.86           |
| 4            | IV    | 178                    | 3                           | Slow learning                   | 1.69           |
| 5            | V     | 193                    | 3                           | Difficulty speaking             | 1.55           |
| 6            | VI    | 161                    | 3                           | Mild mental disability          | 1.86           |
| <b>Total</b> |       | <b>1026</b>            | <b>18</b>                   | -                               | 10.72          |



The table 1 above indicated that there was a high chance for children with special needs to learn self and social development with normal children. Based on the data obtained, the types of disabilities of students that studied in this school were classified as light disabilities.

The forms of revitalization of self-development between normal children and children with special needs can be observed through the activities of gymnastics and Balinese dancing in the following pictures 1.



*Figure 1: Joint Activities between Children with Special Needs (○) and Normal Children*

The principal, teachers, and parents have limited knowledge, experience, skills, management, and infrastructure in the implementation of inclusive education, so the inclusive education process has not been run optimally. Therefore, it needs to be revitalized. The forms of revitalization were increasing resources, such as the workshop of teachers and students parents; apprentice of school staff, especially the manager of school library; increasing the involvement of children with special needs with normal peers in self-development; equipping facilities such as special guidance room and library facilities.

Workshop and mentoring were given to teachers for three days, namely "The Workshop of Increasing Competence of Teachers Based on Inclusive Education" carried out from 17-19 June 2017. The Informants came from elements of bureaucrat and practitioner, specifically Drs. I Wayan Gede Jagra, M.Pd., Head of Curriculum and Assessment Section of Special Education of Bali Province Education Department from elements



of bureaucrat and Dra. Made Murdani, M.Pd. The head of State Special School 1 Bandung from practitioner element. The outcomes of the activity were the increasing of teacher's knowledge and skills with the average of 88 percent with the result that teachers were able to modify the system of learning, syllabus, and inclusive assessment represented in the Inclusive Learning Program Plan and the implementation.

The role of parents in the development of children with special needs is very substantial because the children's daily lives are under protection of the parents more than normal children's are. If the parents do not understand the uniqueness of the children, the growth of children will be disturbed. Such as, Nafi (2012) argues that love of parents, family, and nearby environment is very helpful in developing children with special needs, because they know and understand various aspects more than others. In relation with this, Ernawati (2012) states that the involvement of parents will form a stronger emotional bond between parents and children which can support the mental and emotional development of children better. The revitalization was done to parents through the training "Parenting Guide with Heart". The training was conducted on September 9, 2017 with a psychologist, named Dra. Retno I.G.K. Kesuma, M.Kes. The result was parents were more understanding to the uniqueness of children with special needs because there were additional knowledge and skills towards the problem faced. Parents became confident and empathetic to the children. Parents gave more attention and affection, so there was an emotional bond. This condition impacted to the development of potential children optimally and children experienced the process of becoming independent. The trainees consisting of the parents of children with special needs and keynote speakers appear in the following pictures below:





*Figure 2: Training to Students Parents by Psychologist Dra. Retno I.G.K. Kesuma, M.Kes.*

The revitalization of education staff, especially the manager of school library was held at the Office of Library and Archives of Tabanan Regency for three days from June 19 to June 21, 2017. On the first day, the members were given circulation process material including making membership cards, borrowing and returning books, and readers' visiting. The materials scheduled on the second day were arranging bookshelves, classifying books based on Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), stamping books, completing data, writing books, doing inventories, and filling out classifications based on DDC. Digital-based library program using the program application of INLIS LITE version 3.00 was provided on the last day. The apprentice activity was presented in the following pictures 3.



*Figure 3: Apprentice Activity of the Manager of School Library*



The outcomes of the apprentice activity were the manager of school library had knowledge and skills in school library management either manually or computer based increasing with the average of 90 percent. Knowledge and skills acquired were applied with the result that the look and the services of school library became good and optimal. Normal children and children with special needs were happy to visit, read, or study in the library. It was one form of literacy revitalization for children through reading and improving hobby and reading ability of children.

Children with the characteristic of disabilities generally have a less stable emotion. Lestari (2012) argues that children with special needs have unique characteristics mentally, physically, and emotionally. It required patience and ability to understand the children condition. The children with special needs who were having problems in learning were given special guidance's by class teacher, special counselors, or counseling tutors. Special guidance's given regularly had impact on the attitude and behavior of children. The activities were carried out in the guidance room or in particular places such as in class, training ground, or library. The practices were conducted in a friendly, fun, comfortable, and family atmosphere resulting familiar and communicative interaction. The guidance activities provided in the counseling guidance and in the principal office by the counselors are shown in the following pictures 4.



Figure 4: Guidance to Children with Special Needs

The assessment of the development of disabled children abilities was carried out with the normal children together because the curriculum used was a regular curriculum. However, the implementation of the assessment was distinguished through the level difficulty of questions. The Assessment was conducted in the form of tasks or tests both in writing or orally. Assessment result indicated that the scores of children with special needs were under the Minimum Completion Criteria ( $\leq 60$ ). Based on this fact, the assessment system needs to be revitalized with the result that the assessment outcome represents the accuracy of the specificity and uniqueness of the disabled children. It will not be appropriate if the achievement outcome in the assessment compared with the normal children. The assessment of attitude, knowledge, and skills need to be intactly implemented in accordance to the uniqueness of each child.

This is in accordance with the following opinion, Sukinah (via <http://staff.uny.ac.id>), states that the assessment is not for judging the students but for knowing the progress of the student learning experience. Consequently, the activities were carried out comprehensively as well as equally between the assessment process and the outcome. The assessment of learning outcomes in inclusive education settings should be flexible, continuous, authentic, and comprehensive adjusted with the competence and the needs of each child. To determine mastery learning or minimum standard criteria of competence of each child, it is necessary to have some standards of mastery learning adjusted with special needs of each individual. Assessment of learning outcomes can be done on the ability of students based on the observations of previous capabilities and sustainable. Assessment can be conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the learning activities. The exam materials should be adjusted to the conditions, competencies, and learning programs of children with special needs. Continuous assessment can also be carried out through observation, portfolio, check forms (skills, knowledge, and behavior), tests and quizzes, self-assessment, and reflective journals.



## **D. Discussion**

Some activities undertaken to revitalize the implementation of inclusive education can improve the competence and behavior of teachers, parents and educational staff, and furthermore the empathy between common students and students with special needs. The children with special needs in inclusive education as a marginalized group were given the same space as other normal children in the personal and social development. Seen from critical education, inclusive education is essentially delivering learners to be the subjects according to the own potential which is based on the relation of the subjects between children with disabilities with normal children at the same age (Freire, 2007).

Both types of students were learned in academic and non-academic activities (extra curricular) in the form of self-development activities. The meaning was to create social cohesion between children with special needs with other normal children. The acceptance of students with disabilities by normal peers tended to have a successful learning. In addition, common children were able to build characters, such as empathy, tolerance, and love, so there was togetherness in differences. Meyer's (DPPKLKPD, 2015: 19) states that students with disabilities have greater success when they receive education in an environment that accepts them particularly with regard to social relationships and friendship with the society.

## **E. Conclusion**

Saraswati Elementary School Tabanan has been running inclusive education for six years. However, many obstacles and problems were found in the implementation as the consequence of services and governance which have not run optimally. Therefore, inclusive education needs to be revitalized in order to be able to provide the best service to the stakeholders. The forms of revitalization conducted were increasing resources, such as the workshop of teachers and students parents; apprentice of school staff, especially the manager of school library; increasing the involvement of children with special needs with the other common peers in self-development; equipping facilities such as special

guidance room and library facilities. The conducted revitalization resulted competence enhancement and behavior of teachers, education staffs, and parents to the uniqueness of students with special needs in inclusive education. The acceptance of normal children towards students with special needs established conducive social cohesion in learning process and comprehensive and sustainable assessment system.

The implementation of inclusive education at Saraswati Elementary School Tabanan, Bali is a representation of anti-discrimination practice that accepts diversity and differences of children with special needs with variety of uniqueness and disabilities, such as autism, hyperactive, mild mental disability, slow learning, speaking difficulty, and harelip. The comparison between children with special needs to the normal children indicated 1: 57 or 1.75% towards 1026 students. Both kinds of students were conditioned to learn together in class based on their grades.

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