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Inclusive Education Practices In Bandung Schools: Policies, Realities, and Aspirations

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Abstract: Inclusive education has been introduced in Indonesia since 2003 to ensure the right of every child, including those with special needs, to receive equal education. Despite the issuance of various regulations such as Law No. 20 of 2003, Ministerial Regulation No. 70 of 2009, and Decree No. 56/M/2022, its implementation at the elementary school level still faces challenges. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education in public elementary schools in Bandung. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, and document analysis of school policies. The findings reveal a gap between policy and practice, including a lack of teacher training, limited supporting facilities, and persistent resistance toward students with special needs. Moreover, the curriculum is not yet fully responsive to diverse learning needs. The study concludes that inclusive education has not been implemented in accordance with regulations. Recommendations include enhancing teacher competencies through continuous training, developing adaptive curricula, providing disability-friendly facilities, and promoting inclusive values to all school members and the broader community.

Keywords : Curriculum, Inclusive Education, Elementary School

Abstrak: Pendidikan inklusif di Indonesia diperkenalkan sejak tahun 2003 untuk menjamin hak setiap anak memperoleh pendidikan yang setara, termasuk anak berkebutuhan khusus. Meskipun telah diterbitkan berbagai regulasi seperti UU No. 20 Tahun 2003, Permendiknas No. 70 Tahun 2009, dan Kepmendikbudristek No. 56/M/2022, implementasi di tingkat sekolah dasar masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi pelaksanaan pendidikan inklusif di sekolah dasar negeri di Kota Bandung. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan kepala sekolah, serta studi dokumentasi terhadap kebijakan sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara kebijakan dan praktik, termasuk kurangnya pelatihan guru, minimnya fasilitas pendukung, serta masih adanya resistensi terhadap keberadaan peserta didik berkebutuhan khusus. Kurikulum juga belum sepenuhnya responsif terhadap kebutuhan yang beragam. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pelaksanaan pendidikan inklusif belum sesuai dengan regulasi. Rekomendasi meliputi penguatan kompetensi guru melalui pelatihan berkelanjutan, pengembangan kurikulum adaptif, penyediaan sarana yang ramah disabilitas, serta sosialisasi nilai-nilai inklusif kepada seluruh warga sekolah dan masyarakat luas.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum, Pendidikan Inklusif, Sekolah Dasar

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INTRODUCTION

Elementary schools or in Indonesian known as *Sekolah* (school) *Dasar* (foundation) and

abbreviated as SD are considered a vital yet challenging level of education, forming the foundation for further educational stages. Parents favor public elementary schools due to lower costs, often free tuition, easy access, and the belief that teachers' quality and teaching methods are on par with private schools (Cicin Yulianti, 2013). The inclusive education policy mandates all regular schools to implement inclusive education, warmly received by the public for providing equal opportunities to students from diverse backgrounds, including those with special needs, and fostering diversity and non-discrimination (Umi Nadhiroh, Anas Ahmadi, 2024). Inclusive education encourages classroom and extracurricular activities that value tolerance, mutual acceptance, and respect as God's fellow creations.

In 2022, the "Merdeka Curriculum" was introduced, offering curriculum flexibility through diversification to optimize services tailored to the specific conditions, potentials, needs, and characteristics of individual educational institutions (<https://ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id/hal/kurikulum-merdeka>). A flexible curriculum aligned with ecological needs and learning environments is one key principle in supporting inclusive education. By 2022, 36,000 educational institutions had adopted inclusive education (Inclusive Education Guidelines, Curriculum Standards Agency and Assessment, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). The implementation is governed by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Chapter IV, Articles 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 32) and strengthened by Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009, which affirms students' rights to inclusive education tailored to their needs and abilities.

Although the government's inclusive education policy has shown quantitative success with increasing numbers of implementing schools, there are significant shortcomings. Challenges include diverse teacher perceptions of inclusive education, a lack of specialized support teachers, insufficient curriculum diversification, and inadequate facilities (Riyadi, 2021). Many schools lack essential facilities to support inclusive education. Continuous socialization, evaluation, and improvements are necessary to build collective awareness and align perceptions on implementing inclusive education (Shaw, 2021). Human resources (teachers) with specialized skills, supportive facilities, and regular students' readiness to welcome students with special needs are crucial (Ade Andrian, Wiwin Hendriani, Pramesti Paramitha, 2022).

Implementation difficulties arise due to inadequate teacher availability and expertise, as mandated in inclusive education guidelines for elementary schools (Adibusholeh & Wahyuni, 2021). Currently, inclusive schools operate with limited resources, relying on existing teachers and curricula. Not all educational institutions have trained teachers with adequate skills, strategies, and understanding of inclusive education (Collins et al., 2019). Additionally, schools often lack awareness of the characteristics of students with special needs (PDBK), as outlined in the Inclusive Education Guidelines, which classify them into eight groups:

1. Students with visual impairments;
2. Students with hearing impairments/deafness;
3. Students with intellectual disabilities;
4. Students with physical/motor impairments;
5. Students with emotional and behavioral challenges;
6. Slow learners;
7. Students with specific learning disabilities;
8. Gifted and talented students.

Ministerial Decree No. 262/M/2022 governs one endeavor to identify students' abilities and interests while also improving educational services for all learners. This directive serves as a framework for creating the "Merdeka Curriculum," which is adapted to the requirements of educational institutions, geographic possibilities, and student demographics.

Several studies discuss inclusive education, including research conducted by Irvan and Jauhari (2018), which emphasizes the roles of teachers in inclusive schools divided into three categories:

1. **Classroom teachers**, who typically teach regular/typical students at the elementary school level. These teachers coordinate with special education teachers to develop individualized learning programs for students with special needs in their class.
2. **Subject teachers**, who usually focus on specific subjects such as religious studies and physical education.
3. **Special education teachers (SET)**, who have the expertise to assist students with special

needs (SWSN). These teachers are graduates of special education programs. However, the availability of SETs is very limited, requiring in-service training (INSET) for regular classroom teachers. Enhancing the quality of in-service training can help improve teachers' skills, understanding, and strategies in performing their roles in inclusive education (Ade Andrian, Wiwin Hendriani, Pramesti Paramita, 2022).

Special education teachers, together with the deputy principal and curriculum division, conduct assessments for students with special needs (SWSN), starting during the New Student Enrollment (PPDB) process. Unfortunately, this practice has yet to be implemented. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the abilities, potential, needs, and characteristics of SWSN, as well as their strengths and learning challenges (Irvan and Jauhari, 2018).

Types of Curricula in Inclusive Education^[1] Three types of curricula are generally used in inclusive education systems:

1. National Accommodative Curriculum: Adapted from the national standard, either below or above the standard, depending on students' needs and characteristics.
2. Duplicate Curriculum: Applied to PDBK with average academic abilities, similar to regular students. This curriculum mirrors the national standard in content, objectives, learning processes, and evaluation methods.
3. Modified Curriculum: Adjusted by schools to increase or decrease its complexity, based on students' conditions and capabilities (PKLK, 2011).

The choice of curriculum lies with educational institutions. However, schools lacking training in selecting and implementing the appropriate curriculum often face challenges in teaching and evaluation. Regular teacher training is a concrete strategy to enhance positive interaction and understanding of inclusive education concepts (Biantoro & Setiawan, 2021; Johnson & Johnson, 2019). Schools must continuously adapt their curricula, teaching methods, and facilities (Forlin & Lian, 2008; Muazza et al., 2018).

Challenges and Realities^[2] Although Indonesia's Regulation No. 70/2009 guarantees the right to inclusive education in regular schools (Muslimin & Muqowam, 2021), implementation has faced obstacles. Studies by Purbasari, Hendriani, and Yoenanto (2022) highlight challenges in Kalimantan, where curricula are not adaptive enough for inclusive education. Similarly, Juntak et al. (2023) reveal that inclusive schools often resemble regular ones, showing minimal integration of inclusive curricula. Meka et al. (2023) focus on resolving special needs issues through inclusive education, while Hidayat et al. (2024) explore challenges at the elementary school level without addressing curriculum specifics.

Research Objectives^[3] This study aims to provide insights into implementing inclusive curricula in public elementary schools in Bandung by comparing regulations with actual practices and expectations from schools, students, and parents. The primary research question is: What factors contribute to the mismatch in the implementation of inclusive education?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques as follows:

- a. Survey: To gather preliminary data regarding the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools.
- b. Observation: Conducted in three public elementary schools (SDN-BD1, SDN-BD2, SDN-BD3) in Bandung over three months. Observations include classroom teaching learning activities and interactions outside of class hours.
- c. In-depth Interviews: Involving homeroom teachers, special education teachers (GPK), principals, students, and parents.
- d. Literature Review: Referring to literature and policies related to inclusive education.
- e. Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Engaging school stakeholders, students, parents, education observers, psychologists, and the Bandung City Education Department to validate findings and discuss recommendations.

The schools in this study are coded to maintain anonymity and neutrality in discussions. This strategy also facilitates information classification and data analysis (Hennink et al., 2020).

Table. School Codes in Bandung Used as Case Studies		
No	Case Study	School Code
1	The First Public School	SDN- BD1
2	The Second Public School	SDN- BD2
3	The Third Public School	SDN- BD3

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the collected data, this study applied triangulation of sources and methods. By combining multiple data collection techniques—such as surveys, observations, interviews, literature review, and FGDs—the researcher cross-validated the information gathered from different stakeholders and contexts. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive education practices and challenges. Moreover, field notes and audio recordings were systematically documented and transcribed for thematic analysis, following the coding framework adapted from Braun & Clarke (2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Through the results of the interview, several interesting things were found from the parties which were divided into:

1. Educational unit management officials (Principal, Deputy Principal)

The manager of the education unit, in this case the principal/deputy principal, acknowledged that their school had implemented inclusive education. This is evidenced by accepting diverse students, including students with special needs (PDBK). Unfortunately, only one SDN-BD1 school has implemented new student admissions based on the regular and special pathways on a limited basis because it only has one special accompanying teacher. A special channel was conducted with in-depth interviews with parents/guardians of students related to student identity. It is also recommended to bring a letter from a psychologist or doctor, but it is admitted that it is not comprehensive because there is only one special accompanying teacher. The existence of this teacher is also facilitated by parents of students who have children with special needs.

Of the eight characteristics of PDBK, not all of them can be done with the naked eye, there needs to be a test or medical examination. But as an organizer of the education unit, we have tried to follow what is stated in the inclusive education guidelines. The other two public elementary schools have not implemented the new student admission route separately because they do not have special accompanying teachers. So student admissions are carried out using public channels.

The weakness is that after the teaching process is discovered, there are students with special needs. Because not all parents are open about the condition of their son/daughter. Usually, class teachers express their complaints because they find it "difficult" to teach or assist PDBK. We at the school are waiting for the help of special accompanying teachers from parents, or from the Bandung city education office. In principle, these three public elementary schools support government policies as an effort to equalize and justice for all students. One of the government's efforts to expand educational opportunities and equity for children with special needs through regular schools (Aas 2019, Goransson et, al 2019, Kenny et al, 2020, Savolainer, 2020)

2. Teachers (classroom teachers, field of study teachers, accompanying teachers)

Interviews with classroom teachers regarding the existence of PDBK at SDN-BD1 felt more prepared because from the beginning they had received information about PDBK from special assistant teachers. Even though there was only one person in number, we were helped. This special accompanying teacher is present at the school every day. The presence of GPK is prioritized for students whose parents "present" the GPK. The mechanism is arranged for the first two hours of the student studying in class together with regular students and the next hour studying with GPK by paying attention to material notes from the class teacher.

The curriculum used still refers to the independent curriculum which has been used for regular classes, has not been prepared according to the needs of PDBK. If anyone wants questions, we can

coordinate with GPK. But if there are students who have tantrums, we do have difficulty dealing with them, the class becomes rowdy and there are even some children who become afraid. It is not uncommon to get complaints from parents of students through WA and complaining about whether children with tantrums can be made into special classes and not combined with regular classes. Interviews with teachers of SDN-BD2 and SDN-BD3 gave information that they were surprised when in the teaching and learning process they were found to have difficulty receiving lessons, very "slow", some were easily disturbed emotionally and some who cannot be silent.

If PDBK that experiences muscular/motor obstacles from the beginning can be recognized. But the other classifications are not immediately known. It is very difficult to face PDBK, it is difficult to divide time and do not know how to provide material to these students. Related to the characteristics that are categorized into 8 categories in the PDBK, what teachers can mention are emotional/nervous disorders, tantrums, muscular/motor disorders. Of all the informants of teachers and education service providers, there was no mention of students with multiple barriers, allegedly existing, but it was not confirmed. However, there are teachers who allude to the syndrome shown by students such as: there are students who are 'tantrums', there are students who are irritable and angry, and there are students who cannot be silent.

Teachers must be creative in teaching, work collaboratively and carry out various assessment methods, (Lambrecht et, al, 2020, Wardah 2019). At SDN-BD2 school, there is a student who, when the teacher explains, always chooses the path in the classroom, it is difficult to be told, even if he is escorted to his seat, it only lasts a few minutes after which he returns to the street. This student has an advantage in the field of sports, namely Badminton. His achievements in badminton are very good, winning several times. When playing badminton, they can appear calm, control the court and not be disturbed by the shouts of the audience. Still at the same school, a female student who sat in grade 5 showed a very polite, friendly, and attentive attitude when the teacher explained the lesson but when asked what she heard, it turned out that she could not mention it as well as if there was a test at all could not answer the question given, the condition of this student turned out to be experiencing intellectual obstacles. This is corroborated by the medical results submitted by parents to the school. One of the students at SDN -BD3 when studying in class is always playing in the water, if not allowed, he can have a tantrum and take a long time to calm down. This student is still in grade 1 of elementary school.

The teacher who teaches tries to understand, even though every day he has to mop and remind other students to be careful, so as not to slip. Teaching in grade 1 is not easy, because there are other shiva who shout while saying that teachers who play in water are not allowed in the classroom. But if it is prohibited, PDBK does not want to be in class, run to the toilet and play in the water there. Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education are still very diverse. Some teachers think that the important thing is that PDBK is present at school, interacting with peers, the problem of whether they understand or not is a matter later. However, there are teachers who state that PDBK must get even a little knowledge, because the abilities of students are different. However, there is also another opinion, rather extreme, namely before the education unit is ready with the presence of special assistant teachers or teachers who have received training, PDBK should be placed in an extraordinary school.

The implementation of the curriculum uses the principle of flexibility so that it can be adapted according to the conditions, characteristics and needs of students. The right curriculum can only be done if the teacher already knows the characteristics of the students properly. The method of delivering material carried out by teachers is still relatively uniform, there is no one who specifically answers the needs of students with special needs. For assessment, there is no reference that is used jointly for GDP. It is fully handed over to teachers who have not received in-house training so that sometimes teachers are also confused in giving assessments. It is not uncommon for teachers to feel that they have failed because the material prepared cannot be understood by all students but also does not have a special method that can reaching the GDP in their class. It is difficult to be fair because if you pay too much attention to students with special needs, you can unconsciously ignore other

students. Some teachers stated that they periodically try to evaluate with other fellow teachers in the hope that there will be an improvement in the services provided, to be better. The results of the evaluation can help provide a better understanding as well as identify strengths and weaknesses in points that are still considered weak, (Hidayat & Asyafah, 2019)

3. Parents of Students

Interviews with parents who have children with special needs (PDBK) stated that they are very happy with the existence of inclusive schools, because their children have the same learning opportunities as other students. In addition, access is easier, the cost is cheaper when compared to Extraordinary Schools. For the progress of children's development, some parents stated that they did not know for sure because it was very difficult to invite their children to study at home, so just leave it to the school. However, there are also parents who periodically contact the classroom teacher to ask about their child's attitude or behavior at school.

One of the parents admitted that the school had suggested that their child be included in the test (assessment) to find out exactly the obstacles suffered, but it was not done because of the cost of the project. The hope is that the school can provide this service. Basically, parents are grateful for the existence of inclusive schools. The school gave me bad information because my son was "annoying" with angry actions, shouting and even encouraging teachers who tried to calm him down. However, these conditions are indeed difficult to predict. My child's emotions are easily disturbed if he asks something and does not respond quickly, I also understand that teachers have a responsibility for other students who are even more numerous.

An interview with another student's parent (whose child is in grade 4) said that he basically prefers to send his child to an extraordinary school so that his child "does not look strange" in a regular school. But what is the power of the location is far away, from our domicile, it is difficult to drive because it only has one motorcycle and it is used interchangeably. This mother admitted that she had never checked her child's condition with a doctor or consulted with a psychologist but she drew the conclusion that her child could not focus, could not listen properly, seemed to get bored quickly, and his concentration quickly disintegrated. He further said that he had heard from other people that it could actually be treated but he didn't know how long it would take, and the price of the medicine because if it was expensive, he would not be able to buy it, I was just a traveling cake vendor and my husband worked odd jobs. My son cried several times because a friend mocked him when his test scores were bad. I have also conveyed this to the teacher. It seems that now no one is mocking anymore because my son has never complained and cried.

Interviews with parents of regular class students can in principle accept the presence of PDBK together with their children in the same school, by paying attention to the fact that no one is tantrum, because it will definitely disturb other students. Maybe it would be good to have a limit on the PDBK accepted in inclusion schools so that everyone feels safe, comfortable and calm in learning. Learning requires calmness. There is an interesting opinion from the parents of students why the room is not separated. So even though they are in an inclusion school, there are classes specifically for them. This view is certainly not appropriate in the implementation of inclusive education, because the presence of inclusive education is precisely to realize education for all, which can increase positive interaction and collaboration between students, (Justin Sinaga Simanjuntak, et al. 2023, Johnson & Johnson, 2019)

4. Students

Interviews with elementary school students at these three schools are proud because they can accept the existence of Special Needs Students (PDBK) as a reality. Mutual respect, mutual respect, learning together, expressed by one of the 5th grade students at SDN-BD1, a 6th grade student from SDN-BD2 said that like the sound of Bhineka Tunggal Ika in Pancasila is different but one. Meanwhile, the 5th grade students from SDN-BD3 reminded that everything is God's creation. There were even students who said it was their destiny, Khan couldn't choose. But if someone has a

tantrum or screams during a silent class, it is very disturbing.

The lesson was stopped because the teacher was busy taking care of the tantrum. In addition, other students joined in the noise, chatted and it gave them a headache. Then there are also those who are upset when someone is nosy, while passing by to grab stationery, or deliberately hit the student's head, it doesn't hurt but shocks, when reported to the teacher, the teacher said it was understandable, yes. Later, the teacher will advise, so continue and there will be no change.

5. Bandung City Education Office and Answerat Provincial Office

The results of an interview with the Bandung City Education Office stated that inclusive education has not been implemented properly. Apart from the limited teaching staff who have expertise in educating and assisting PSBK. Classroom teachers have not been equipped with knowledge of inclusive education but "must" teach. The Bandung City Education Office does not have the authority to recruit teachers or teaching staff. In addition, the limitation of budget/funds is also still an obstacle in implementing inclusive education.

It was emphasized that inclusive education is not only about GDP, but for all. Comfort for all, acceptance and tolerance of diversity are important for the culture of the Indonesian nation. On a limited scale, there are plans to provide training for regular teachers and prepare human resources with graduates of extraordinary schools who will later teach in inclusive schools as special assistant teachers. For now, special accompanying teachers are still provided by parents.

One of the elementary schools (SD) that is also part of this study does have a special accompanying teacher and it is true that it is provided by parents. In addition to special accompanying teachers, there are also called helpers. Helpers or people who are on standby to help are also provided by parents of students with special needs. However, in this interview, no helper has been found who specifically accompanies PDBK when needed. The helpers encountered during the observation were parents, families who were present at the school or the school, in this case teachers and other students.

Helpers at school are not appointed but on their own initiative. The agency also said that it has not been able to facilitate the needs of teachers/teaching staff in accordance with the needs of students with special needs. A teacher procurement program is being considered. The capacity of teachers from SLB graduates is definitely more qualified than teachers who only participate in in-house training, but considering the limitations of teachers who graduated from extraordinary schools (SLB), training/in-house training/TOT policies still need to be carried out. It is hoped that there will be collaboration between various parties such as universities/campuses that have a faculty of psychology and universities/campuses that have teacher training programs. The results of this discussion show that there is still a need for increased cooperation and collaboration to face existing challenges. In the implementation of inclusive education, there are still challenges that need to be found and an inclusion committee is needed, (Budijanto & Rahmanto, 2021)

Discussion

1. Regulations on Inclusive Education in Indonesia

The regulations on inclusive education in Indonesia are based on the prevailing legal framework. Article 28H, Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (as amended) states that every person has the right to receive special treatment and ease to achieve equality and justice. Subsequently, the government issued policies on inclusive education as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Chapter IV, Articles 5 Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, and Article 32. These articles mention that special education is for students with disabilities (physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social) or those with extraordinary intelligence, conducted inclusively at both primary and secondary education levels.

Specifically, inclusive education is outlined in the Minister of National Education Regulation (Permendiknas) No. 70 of 2009, and in the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology

Regulation No. 56/M/2022 concerning guidelines for implementing the curriculum in the context of learning recovery. This regulation mentions that educational institutions need to develop curricula with the principle of diversification tailored to the conditions of the institution, regional potential, and students' needs. Research findings through interviews reveal that these regulations have not been fully implemented at the teacher level. This is concerning, as changes in regulations without corresponding curriculum adjustments can gradually affect the quality of education negatively (Erin Aprillia, Cut Nurhayati, & Anjani Putri Belawati Pandiangan, 2022).

In practice, the implementation of inclusive education is still inconsistent with the regulations. Admission processes for students with special needs (PDBK) are not differentiated by category. A rigorous procedure using specially designed assessment instruments for PDBK is required (Arifin, F., Supena, A., & Yufiarti, Y., 2023). The success of inclusive education involves collaboration across various procedures, processes, and components, including the student admission process (Alfian, Muhammad A, 2029). Therefore, a review of the system is needed to address educational disparities and controversies (Fiddini, P.F., Salsabila, F., & Latif, M., 2023).

2. Implementation of Inclusive Education in Bandung

Based on observations, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs), the implementation of inclusive education regulations is being carried out. Several primary schools (SD) have declared themselves inclusive education providers. However, in practice, their readiness is still lacking. This includes a shortage of special assistant teachers, a uniform curriculum, and conventional teaching methods. The "Merdeka Curriculum" offers greater flexibility in providing suitable education services for all students, including PDBK (Wardah, 2019).

Schools should create variations and innovations in implementing these guidelines (Apriani et al., 2021). Out of three schools observed, two have not yet applied an inclusive approach in the new student admission process (PPDB). Ideally, PPDB should begin with a transitional period, helping students adapt to new environments, systems, and learning methods. The next steps should involve identifying and assessing student conditions, such as visual impairments, hearing difficulties, intellectual or motor disabilities, emotional and behavioral issues, slow learners, students with specific learning disabilities, and gifted or talented students. This identification process shapes the student profiles, influencing the curriculum, lesson planning, and teaching. However, field observations show that there is a gap between regulations and their implementation.

Due to a lack of special assistant teachers, regular classroom teachers often handle PDBK without adequate knowledge or skills. One third-grade teacher at SD-BD2 stated, "The government sets regulations, but they remain mere regulations without addressing on-ground needs," pointing out the absence of special teachers and supporting facilities. SD-BD2 has five PDBK students: one in Grade 1, one in Grade 2, and two in Grade 5. The challenges range from weak motor skills, slow learners, visual and hearing impairments, to wheelchair users. Special assistant teachers, hired privately by parents, significantly alleviate the teaching burden. However, this support is only available to students whose parents can afford it, leaving other PDBK fully dependent on regular classroom teachers. Infrastructure is another major concern. Most schools lack adequate facilities for inclusive education. Schools need to prepare teachers, curricula, and facilities in advance, periodically conduct socialization programs, and consider local cultural wisdom to create an inclusive educational environment (Umi Nadhiroh & Anas Ahmadi, 2024; Mansur, 2019).

3. Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia Through the Merdeka Curriculum

The implementation of inclusive education within the Merdeka Curriculum provides vast opportunities. The regulations and guidelines are well established as references. However, due to the

lack of adequate teacher preparation, teachers often act based on their own perceptions and expectations. No specific training has been provided to help teachers understand and design a curriculum suited to the needs, conditions, and characteristics of students. Schools should accommodate the needs of all children regardless of their physical conditions (Biantoro & Setiawan, 2019). Many classroom teachers feel unprepared, with some expressing frustration and exhaustion because their expectations do not match the reality in the field. One teacher expressed regret about their limited development despite their dedication to teaching.

However, a different perspective came from an elementary school teacher who initially felt reluctant but later voluntarily provided extra lessons for students with special needs (PDBK). Although challenging due to difficulties in identifying the specific needs of PDBK, this initiative aimed at ensuring these students did not fall too far behind. "I usually give an extra hour of lessons without any additional payment because I know that most PDBK in my school (Sukasari) come from underprivileged families. My goal is to help them catch up," said one teacher. In regular classes, the same teaching methods and assessments are applied to all students. Although some students showed progress through these extra lessons, others did not. Communication with parents happens through a liaison book, with hopes that parents will also support their children's learning at home.

A different story was shared by another teacher who felt drained after teaching. "I often lose my voice because managing two PDBK students is exhausting. One can't sit still, always walking around, while the other struggles to grasp even basic concepts. Teaching them how to hold a pencil is tiring, while the rest of the class is already fluent in reading and writing," the teacher lamented. Some teachers believe that practical implementation should be improved before enforcing regulations, especially since their teacher training programs did not include PDBK-related content. Consequently, the handling of PDBK in schools remains inadequate, with teachers resorting to traditional methods. PDBK may feel neglected, not because of unwillingness, but due to teachers' heavy administrative workload and the absence of clear guidelines.

4. Hopes for Inclusive Education in Bandung

Educational professionals generally support government policies on inclusive education. However, policies should be integrated across various sectors. Integrating culturally relevant approaches into learning processes can enhance the material's relevance and create a conducive learning environment (Martinez, 2016). The hope is that the regulations can be effectively implemented in practice. This includes not only classroom teachers but also the provision of special assistant teachers (GPK), relevant training on curriculum implementation for PDBK, and the establishment of scientific forums where teachers, education authorities, and parents can discuss field realities and share feedback. Furthermore, partnerships with businesses through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs for infrastructure support and collaborations with universities, particularly those with psychology, education, and medical faculties, are essential. These institutions can assist with training teachers, conducting assessments, and classifying PDBK characteristics.

It is hoped that Bandung can become a model for inclusive education implementation. The involvement of all stakeholders in delivering top-notch services to all students is crucial. Increasing awareness and understanding of inclusive education can foster greater tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Artiles et al., 2017). The purpose of this research is to provide perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education across schools in Bandung, comparing existing regulations, current practices, and future aspirations.

CONCLUSION

Education consistently involves key components: diverse student inputs, a learning process that includes the availability of teachers suited to students' needs, a curriculum that accommodates various student situations and characteristics, and the output in the form of expected learning outcomes. The main discrepancies in the implementation of inclusive education are:

- a. Insufficient availability of special assistant teachers (GPK)
- b. Regular classroom teachers not included in training or development programs
- c. Limited infrastructure and facilities
- d. Suboptimal curriculum implementation due to applying the same curriculum to all students
- e. Uneven socialization efforts, leaving some teachers and students unprepared to accommodate students with special needs (PDBK)
- f. An uncondusive environment due to a lack of integration between regulations, socialization, and information regarding inclusive education

Although inclusive education has been planned and clear regulations exist, these policies have yet to address real conditions in the field. Understanding of inclusive education varies widely, with no uniform perception among educators. Schools often accept PDBK out of obligation rather than readiness. Moreover, many schools offering inclusive services have not implemented the proper new student admission process as outlined in the regulations. The **transition period**, which helps students adjust to a new environment, system, and learning method according to their individual characteristics, has not been carried out. Similarly, **identification and assessment processes** to understand student profiles are not conducted in most schools, resulting in students not receiving the appropriate services, facilities, or curriculum for their needs. A **review of school readiness** is essential before implementing inclusive education to ensure effective and successful integration.

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