
Implementation of Inclusive Education Programs in Reading Practice for Low-Grade Slow Learners in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental right afforded to children, designed to prepare future generations. However, it is essential to recognize that not all children assimilate education at the same rate, a phenomenon commonly described as slow learning. Furthermore, the absence of specialized mentorship in primary schools exacerbates this issue. Consequently, it is imperative for educators to implement effective strategies to address these challenges. This study aims to delineate the application of an inclusive education program in supplementary reading sessions specifically designed for slow learners. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative research design, data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The research, designed as an intrinsic case study, involved two classroom teachers and slow learner students in grades one and two at SDN Wiropaten. Data analysis included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with data validity ensured through source and technique triangulation, as well as crosschecking. The findings indicate the effectiveness of the inclusive education program in addressing the needs of slow learner students in the lower grades. Several programs and outcomes resulting from this inclusive education initiative were identified. Initiatives for grade one included establishing rapport with slow learners, fostering trust, facilitating social interaction, and implementing follow-up strategies. Initiatives for grade two involved assigning independent tasks, encouraging random student participation (such as alphabet memorization), engaging in word games, and conducting guided reading exercises.

Keywords: *inclusive education; slow learner; reading practice*

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan merupakan hak paten yang diberikan kepada anak guna mempersiapkan generasi di masa depan. Namun, perlu disadari bahwa tidak semua anak dapat menerima pendidikan dengan baik yang dikenal dengan siswa slow learner. Terlebih lagi tidak adanya guru pembimbing khusus menjadi permasalahan dalam sekolah dasar. Untuk itu perlu adanya metode yang harus digunakan oleh guru dalam menangani masalah tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi

program pendidikan inklusif dalam latihan membaca tambahan untuk siswa slow learner. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan yaitu penelitian deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Penelitian ini berbentuk studi kasus intrinsik yang melibatkan subyek penelitian berupa 2 guru kelas dan siswa slow learner kelas I-II di SDN Wiropaten. Data yang diperoleh kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, display data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Untuk menguji keabsahan data digunakan triangulasi sumber dan teknik serta crosscheck. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan implementasi program pendidikan inklusif dapat digunakan oleh guru kelas rendah yaitu kelas I-II kepada siswa slow learner. Terdapat beberapa program dan hasil dari penerapan program pendidikan inklusif ini. Program siswa slow learner untuk kelas 1 antara lain, melakukan pendekatan terhadap siswa slow learner, bangun kepercayaan siswa slow learner terhadap guru kelas, ajak siswa bersosialisasi dengan temannya, dan lakukan pendekatan lanjutan. Program siswa kelas 2 antara lain, pemberian tugas mandiri kepada siswa slow learner, pemanggilan siswa secara acak (menghafal alfabeth), game penyebutan kata, dan antri membaca.

Kata Kunci: pendidikan inklusif; slow learner; latihan membaca

INTRODUCTION

Education is an inherent right that children should receive from infancy and continue throughout their lives, with the goal of nurturing future generations for the betterment of the nation (Kurniawan, 2017; Shinta & Ain, 2021). The education that is received and enjoyed must be of high quality and excellence, serving as a foundation to face the challenges of a harsh and competitive world. Education is a lifelong guide for continuous learning (Anjarsari, 2018; Nurhamsih et al., 2019). The quality of a child's development is influenced by extent of their education. Primary school education serves as the foundational level for initiating formal education (Septiana Soleha et al., 2021). Education is not confined to the school environment but extends throughout life. Education can be facilitated through learning experiences provided both within and outside of school. For instance, in a school setting, the teacher plays a crucial role in the success of the learning process. This includes the teacher's proficiency in understanding theoretical concepts, delivering instruction, and selecting appropriate learning media and methods (Maria, 2020).

According to Fadilah et al (2021) "Education is a process that grows, develops, matures, organises, and directs". One form of this process is reading. One of the essential language skills that student must acquire is reading, followed by writing and arithmetic (Ansulat Esmael, 2018; Maria, 2020; Pinto, 2018). Reading is an activity aimed at sharpening memory as a preparation for future life. It is a complex cognitive process used to construct or derive meaning from text comprehension (Jabamani, 2016). The ability to read is an important thing for humans to have (Nishanthini E, 2018; Nugraheni et al., 2019). With this fundamental skill, students can acquire knowledge through reading activities. Important components in effective reading instruction are reading strategies and reading assessment strategies (Al-Ghazo, 2015). According to Triastuti et al., (2021) the limited reading ability of students at the primary school level requires teachers to use appropriate media and methods in order to understand the learning material.

Reading difficulty arises when students struggle to decode words, resulting in low reading proficiency. This challenge is often attributed to specific conditions and may be associated with psychological factors, particularly personality, self-assurance, and adjustment issues (Cindrakasih & Paujiah, 2021; Nurfadhillah et al., 2022). This will not eliminate obstacles or learning difficulties faces by students and teachers. Every child has unique abilities and challenges, making it difficult for them to engage with fast-paced and rigid learning method (Dasaradhi et al., 2016; Maulidya, 2021). According to S. W. Anggraeni et al. (2021), students lacking reading proficiency may encounter challenges in comprehending and assimilating information from diverse sources, including student manuals, supplementary texts, and other written educational materials.

The factors contributing to reading difficulties include students struggling to read consonant letters at the end of words, distinguishing between different letter shapes, stammering while reading, and having difficulty understanding the meaning of words in sentences and their proper pronunciation (Iskandar et al., 2021; Rahma & Dafit, 2021; Sarina, 2018). These difficulties or obstacles can be triggered by symptoms of various problems, such as lack or absence of motivation to learn, low learning achievement, poor learning habits, slow learning, and even poor attitudes towards teachers, learning, and school. Learning disability is synonymous with impaired intellectual development (Horridge, 2020).

According to Cahyani & Nugroho (2021) inclusive schools can be an alternative learning implementation for slow learners, it aims to enable slow learners to interact together in one environment with other students. SDN Wiropaten Surakarta is one of the primary schools in Surakarta that offers inclusive education. Inclusive education is a form of education that integrates all children into the same classroom, where typically developing children and children with special needs learn together (Irdamurni, 2015; Mareza, 2016). The purpose of inclusive education is as a collaborative step for various parties in handling education (Anany, 2021). Students attend school and come from various backgrounds (Arianto, 2022). Most of the special needs children who enrol as students at SDN Wiropaten are slow learners.

Slow Learner is a term for a child who is slightly mentally retarded, or who develops more slowly than normal speed with an IQ score in the range of 70-89 (Amelia et al., 2023; Prawesti & Yoenanto, 2021). Their intelligence is below average, but they are not incapable children, it's just that they need a hard struggle to understand and understand what they are learning. Slow learner students need teachers when they are at school for special guidance so that they can follow the learning well according to their ability level (Mutmainah, 2017).

Challenges that teachers must face in inclusive learning by knowing the stages in inclusive learning (Mumpuniarti et al., 2020). According to Marsidi (2021) there are still many children with special needs (ABK) who have not received educational services according to their needs. In basic education, the presence of inclusive education needs more attention, as well as children with special needs (Astuti, 2017; Wibowo & Anisa, 2017). In general, when a school is called an inclusive school, there should be shadow teachers or special mentor teachers assigned. According to Ainnayyah et al. (2019) in their findings show that only a small proportion of schools have a Special Mentor Teacher (GPK). The issue is that there are no professional teachers at the school specifically trained to teach children with special needs (slow learners). These students require special attention during the learning process, including the delivery of material

and the implementation of instructional strategies while at school (Khusna, 2020). However, all admitted students are placed into mixed classes without differentiation, with only one teacher instructing the class. This situation leads to inequality among students in the school.

There are several previous studies related to the implementation of inclusive education programs in elementary schools. According to Lazar, (2020) an important element in providing inclusive education is openness without discrimination. According to Wijaya et al., (2023) the implementation of inclusive education programs in the city of Serang hasn't been utilized optimally at the educational unit level. According to FatikhatusSa'idah, (2015) the placement of students with special needs in the implementation of inclusive education uses a pull out class model, where at special times, children with special needs are taken into an inclusive room by a special supervising teacher. In this study, the implementation of the inclusive education program was targeted at low-grade slow learner students for additional reading practice in elementary schools. This research also includes a division of programs conducted over one year, allowing the progress in understanding of slow learner students to be clearly observed through this research program.

This is based on the consideration that slow learner students consistently face difficulties with reading, which hinders their ability to comprehend lesson materials unless the content is presented directly (orally) by the teacher. According to Purwanti et al., (2022) patience and pleasant behaviour are needed to teach slow learner students. In order to realise the optimality of education for children with special needs, it is necessary to have the right teaching method by teachers (Adewumi et al., 2017; Azizah, 2022). In learning activities, there is a learning method that focuses on the learning objectives to be achieved (Irma Sari et al., 2021). The use of inclusive education programs can facilitate learning for students by ensuring they receive instruction without differentiation from other students. This allows students with learning difficulties to make the most of their additional learning time.

The objectives of the research conducted by the researcher were to describe the programme involved in the application of inclusive education programs at SDN Wiropaten Surakarta, and to identify the improvement achieved by low grade slow learner students at SDN Wiropaten Surakarta. The benefit of this research is to facilitate the teaching of reading to students with special needs (slow learners) by low-grade teachers through the application of inclusive education programs, particularly in the absence of special needs teachers (GBK) at SDN Wiropaten Surakarta. It is hoped that classroom teachers will be able to provide equitable instruction, even when there are students with special needs (slow learners).

METHODS

Type and Design

The research method employed is classified as a qualitative descriptive study, utilizing case study research and literature review. In the case study, researchers conducted interviews with classroom teachers who implement inclusive education programs in additional reading practice for slow learner students. Meanwhile, literature reviews were conducted by the author to search journals relevant to the issues occurring in the elementary school.

Data and Data Sources

This study was conducted at SDN Wiropaten Surakarta, as this institution is one of the schools in Surakarta that offers inclusive education but lacks shadow teachers (GPK). Consequently, the researchers chose this school as the site for data collection. The research adopts an intrinsic case study approach, involving research subjects that include two classroom teachers and students with learning difficulties in grades I-II. The focus of the observation is on the role of the classroom teachers in relation to students with learning difficulties and the implementation of inclusive education programs by these teachers. Data collection methods comprised observation, interviews and documentation.

Data collection technique and data analysis

The instruments or data collection tools employed in this research are direct observation and interviews. Direct observation was conducted through participant observation, wherein the researcher actively engaged with the classroom teacher during the implementation of inclusive education programs for students with learning difficulties. The researcher applied a data validity test, incorporating a credibility test and employing triangulation techniques. Specifically, the researcher utilized interviews and cross-checking existing data at the school to ensure data validity. Data analysis was carried out through the processes of data collection, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Classroom Teacher Programme in Implementing Inclusive Education for Slow Learner Students in Low Grade

This research examines the methods employed by classroom teachers in addressing the needs of low-grade slow learner students in additional reading practices within elementary schools. The inclusive education program implemented at SDN Wiropaten Surakarta targets students in grades 1 and 2. At the time of initial registration, most parents are unaware that their child is classified as a slow learner, often attributing their child's difficulties to laziness. To determine whether a child qualifies as a slow learner, an assessment is conducted by the school during the registration process. Such assessments are, of course, subject to the consent of the students' parents or guardians. The following data pertains to grade 1 and grade 2 students who are categorized as slow learners.

Table 1. Categories of Slow Learner (10 pt.)

Student Name	Class	Category
F	Class 1	Slow Learner (IQ 71)
A	Class 1	Slow Learner (IQ 73)
Fz	Class 1	Slow Learner (IQ 79)
H	Class 2	Slow Learner (IQ 85)
I	Class 2	Slow Learner (IQ 79)
Ar	Class 2	Slow Learner

(IQ 71)

The research conducted using the interview method reveals that there are six low-grade slow learner students at SD Negeri Wiropaten Surakarta, with three students in grade 1 and three students in grade 2. These students are categorized as slow learners due to having IQ scores ranging from 70 to 89. Slow learners are defined as students with special needs who perform below average, but whose cognitive abilities remain above the level of mental disability (tunagrahita) (Khusna, 2020). Unlike other children with special needs, slow learner are not easily identifiable. Physically, they are not markedly different from typically developing children. However, slow learners exhibit slower cognitive processing, require more time to assimilate stimuli, and face challenges in adapting to new environments. Despite these difficulties, they generally perform better than children with mental retardation (Malik & Nugraheni, 2020).

Almost all slow learner students are not easy to socialise with other students well (L. Anggraeni, 2015). Therefore, teacher motivation is essential for conducting effective instruction within the classroom. Learning motivation is closely linked to educational outcomes (Suliwati, 2021). However, this motivation is not always effective, as slow learner students frequently require the presence of a trusted individual, similar to their parents, while they are at school. Teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of inclusive education, as they are the primary figures who interact directly with the students (Hidayah et al., 2021). The individual trusted by parents to care for their children at school is the classroom teacher.

In this context, the classroom teacher can be regarded as a surrogate for the parents while the children are at school. Consequently, to address the needs of slow learner students enrolled in elementary school, a program was developed by a consortium of lower-grade teachers specifically designed to support and manage these students.

Table 2. Slow Learner Programme for Low Grade Students

Category	Programme
Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Approach the students. b. Build students' trust in the teacher. c. Encourage students to socialise with their friends. d. Continue with the approach to the school community.
Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Giving independent assignments to students b. Random calling of students (memorising Alfabeth) c. Mention of the word d. Queue to read

The reading training program for slow learner students in lower grades is divided into two categories: grade 1 and grade 2 elementary school. For grade 1 students, the focus is on establishing an initial connection with the students. This process begins with building trust by creating a sense of security and comfort during the learning experience. Once slow learner students develop trust in the classroom teacher, akin to

the trust they have in their parents, the next phase involves encouraging them to interact and socialize with their peers, particularly classmates who are consistently present during lessons. The final stage aims to foster continued engagement between slow learner students and the school community, ensuring that they do not feel isolated when away from home.

The program is not easily implemented. It necessitates patience and diligence in establishing a rapport and ensuring that slow learner students feel comfortable with the classroom teacher. Parents are often hesitant to leave their children alone at school. Therefore, it is essential to engage in gradual communication with the parents of slow learner students to facilitate their willingness to entrust their children to the classroom teacher. The goal is to foster the independence of slow learner students within the school environment.

Upon advancing to grade 2, the emphasis shifted to the reading training program administered by the classroom teacher. The initial component of the program involves assigning independent tasks to slow learner students, which are communicated through their parents when the students return home from school. This approach aims to enable slow learner children to gradually develop independent learning skills at home, with the support of their parents.

The second component of the program involves randomly selecting students to come forward and introduce the alphabet to slow learner students. This activity is conducted in conjunction with other typical students to ensure that slow learner students do not feel singled out and to prevent other students from feeling envious of their peers. Slow learners require repeated and extended periods of instruction to effectively complete the tasks assigned to them (A. Anggraeni, 2021). Therefore, the implementation system is to gradually adjust students' abilities. Each student who advances will be given a follow-up or repeat note in the book carried by each student.

The third component of the program is word naming, which is implemented during learning breaks. During these pauses, the classroom atmosphere can become less conducive to learning. Therefore, the classroom teacher introduces word naming activities by writing words on the board or in a book designated by the teacher. The activity involves either identifying the individual letters in the word or spelling out the combination of letters, depending on the student's proficiency levels.

The final component is the reading queue, which takes place at the beginning of each lesson. The teacher asks students to bring their reading books from home and then organizes them into a queue based on various criteria, such as the order of arrival or a designated sequence determined by the teacher. For slow learner students, the teacher typically calls them first to ensure they are not discouraged or placed in a negative mood.

Results of the Application of Inclusive Education Programs for Low Grade Slow Learner Students

The implementation of inclusive education programs occurs over a period of two years, with one year dedicated to grade 1 and one year to grade 2, utilizing the same methodology but with different programs. The initial program in grade 1 is a preparatory phase where the inclusive education program is fully applied to slow learner students. The subsequent program in grade 2 serves as a refinement phase, applied to all students in grade 2 without exception. The results obtained from the application of these programs are as follows.

Table 3. Result of Programme Implementation Class 1

Category	Programme	Result
Class 1	Approach the students	a. Students do not shut themselves in.
		b. Students are willing to interact.
		c. Students can control their emotions step by step
	Build students trust in the teacher	a. Students want to be left by their parents
		b. Students feel comfortable with the teacher
	Encourage students to socialise with their friends	a. Students can play with their friends
		b. Students are able to chat with their friends
	Continue with the approach to the school community	a. Students are introduced to other teachers during breaks.
		b. Students greet the teacher when they meet.
		c. Students greet/shake hands with other teachers.

From the table above, the results of the inclusive education programs for slow learner students are categorized into four distinct groups per class. Each of these categories reflects the outcomes of the implemented methods. For the program conducted by the grade 1 teacher, which involves engaging with slow learner students, the observed achievements include: students no longer isolating themselves, students demonstrating a willingness to interact with the classroom teacher, and students gradually learning to manage their emotions.

The second program aims to build students' confidence in their classroom teacher. As a result of this initiative, students become more comfortable being left by their parents during school hours. Initially, slow learner students who needed parental assistance gradually adapt to greater independence at school. The objective of this program is to foster increased self-reliance among slow learner students, thereby reducing their dependence on parental support, especially during school hours.

The third program aims to encourage slow learners to socialize with their peers. Following the implementation of the second program, the subsequent goal is to facilitate social interactions between slow learner students and their classmates. This involves actively engaging peers to include slow learners in social activities, thereby fostering the development of their social skills (Hartini et al., 2017). This can be facilitated by the classroom teacher during instructional time or breaks. Socialization can be encouraged by either persuading slow learner students to join their peers or by having their peers actively include them in activities such as snacking or other recreational pursuits.

The fourth programme focused on enhancing engagement with the school community. The outcome of this program is that slow learner students no longer experience fear of the school environment. This approach involves introducing teachers through frequent but minimal interactions, such as greetings and handshakes. These activities typically occur during school arrival and break times. Initially, slow learner students may avoid interactions with unfamiliar teachers. Therefore, patience is essential when working with slow learners. Over time, these students will gradually begin to initiate greetings on their own if they are encouraged to do so consistently. Slow learners are more likely to engage independently once they feel comfortable with the teacher.

Table 4. Result of Programme Implementation Class 2

Category	Programme	Result
Class 2	Giving independent assignments to students	Students do the assignment given (video evidence from parents)
	Random calling of students (memorising Alfabeth)	Students show progress when memorising alphabeth
	Mention of the word	- Students can spell correctly - Students can mention the word correctly
	Queue to read	Progress assessment from the teacher when finished reading

Similarly, in Grade 1, the application focused on the classroom teacher's approach. In Grade 2, the emphasis shifts to applying the inclusive education programs specifically to additional reading practice. As indicated by the table above, the program in Grade 2 is also divided into four categories. The goal for slow learner students in Grade 2 is to achieve reading fluency, particularly in recognizing the alphabet. Advanced reading skills will be influenced by the proficiency developed during the initial stages of reading instruction (Mariati, 2018).

In the program introduced by the first-grade teacher in Grade 2, individual assignments are given to students. The effectiveness of this initial program is evidenced by students' completion of tasks, as documented by videos submitted by parents to the teacher. The successful implementation of this program requires collaboration between teachers and parents to monitor student progress outside of school. These assignments are designed to promote student autonomy and foster a sense of responsibility while students are at home.

The implementation of the second program in Grade 2 involved the random calling of students to assess their memorization of the alphabet. The outcome of this program is that students demonstrate progress in their memorization abilities over time. This program is applied uniformly across the entire Grade 2 class. The random calling is conducted with all students, without exception. However, there are notable differences between typical students and slow learner students, particularly in terms of

progress. Slow learner students are specifically targeted for alphabet memorization, while other students focus on their individual progress.

The implementation of the third program in Grade 2 involves word mentioning. The outcome of this program is that slow learner students are able to continue a word after the teacher provides the first letter. This activity can be conducted through games. For instance, if the teacher mentions an object that begins with the letter "M," such as "Meja" (table in Indonesian), the slow learner students should be able to complete the word. This program is also applied to all students to ensure there is no discrimination between slow learners and their peers. Students are expected to list and correctly spell the letters in the given word. The word mentioning activity is typically carried out through games, and students can participate individually or in groups. When conducted individually, slow learner students are directly selected by the classroom teacher to participate in the game.

The most recent program implemented in Grade 2 for slow learner students is the reading rotation. This initiative is also extended to other students by the classroom teacher. As a result of this program, teachers provide individual notes in each student's book while also maintaining their own records. This program represents a culmination of previous efforts and aims to develop reading skills in slow learner students before they advance to grade 3.

One of the roles of teachers in the lower grades is to help develop students' language skills (Dhari et al., 2022). Teachers also believe that the inclusion program is designed to help children gain confidence in their abilities (Putri & Hamdan, 2021). This method is implemented by the classroom teacher, where slow learner students are not required to have a shadow teacher for developing their reading skills while interacting in elementary school. Slow learner students are encouraged to be independent, relying on the classroom teacher to serve both as a shadow teacher and as a homeroom teacher for other students. It is important to note that these students are not lacking in intelligence; rather, they have minimal learning achievements or are slightly below the average of their peers in both academic and non-academic areas (Safitri et al., 2021). Therefore, to facilitate their learning progress, an inclusive education program focused on reading practice is implemented for slow learner students at SDN Wiropaten Surakarta.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of inclusive education programs for reading practice among low-grade slow learner students at SDN Wiropaten has proven highly beneficial, particularly for those in Grades 1 and 2. The program involves a structured approach facilitated by teachers for each grade level. This initiative is further segmented into specific activities tailored to Class 1 and Class 2. The program for Class 1 includes strategies to approach slow learner students, build their trust in the classroom teacher, encourage socialization with peers, and follow up on their progress. The program in Grade 2 includes assigning independent tasks to slow learner students, conducting random calls for alphabet memorization, engaging in word-naming games, and organizing reading queues. The implementation of this program has yielded satisfactory results in managing slow learner students within mixed-ability classes. This success is attributed to the specific achievements that slow learner students are expected to attain before advancing to the next grade. The ultimate goal of this

approach is to ensure that slow learner students achieve reading fluency by the time they enter Grade 3.

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