

Implementation of the independent curriculum for students with special needs at SDN Gadang 03 Malang City

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to find out how the independent curriculum was implemented for students with special needs at SD Gadang 3 Malang City as well as the types of children with special needs within it. Data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observations, and documentation. The subjects of this research are 5th-grade teachers who also handle students with special needs, the school principal, and the students with special needs themselves. Data analysis techniques used are data collection, data reduction, data display, and verification. The results of this study indicated that the implementation of the independent curriculum for students with special needs at SDN Gadang 3 is packaged in a simple and detailed manner. So both regular and those with special needs, can effectively and maximally absorb the delivered material. There is no specific strategy in the learning process, it's just that the method of delivery uses diction that is easy to understand. The use of teaching modules in the learning process is also generalized to other students. The process of assessing learning outcomes is obtained from the mid-semester and final-semester examinations provided by the GPK team in their respective cities.

Keywords: implementation, teaching modules, independent curriculum

PRELIMINARY

Education is of utmost importance and is necessary for all individuals, including children who are physically or mentally challenged, commonly referred to as children with special needs. They should not be marginalized from their rights to access education (Safitri and Hijriyani, 2021). One of the subjects facing such challenges is children with special needs, whose learning difficulties are largely influenced by below-average intelligence (intellectual disability), lack of self-confidence (emotional disability), developmental disorders (dyslexia), lack of interest in certain subjects, time constraints, and procrastination in completing tasks. However, when interacting with other children within the mainstream education system, teachers and schools need to provide special attention to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Ningrum, 2022).

The government has established inclusive schools as a means of inclusive education with a Circular Letter from the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education of the Ministry of National Education regarding inclusive education No. 380/C.C6/MN/2003 (Dirjen Dikdas, 2003). The circular stated that each city/district should have at least 4 inclusive schools, consisting of elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. The basic concept of inclusive schools is to focus on learning that is tailored to the needs of each child. The objectives of inclusive school activities are: (1) preventing environmental factors from becoming obstacles to children's learning (preventive activities); (2) handling children's learning difficulties (intervention step); and (3) replacing lost or obstructed functions with other functions (replacement functions) (Dwi and Setianingsih 2019).

Inclusive education is a form of education that offers all children high-quality learning opportunities, including children with special needs. These special children are also unique individuals who should be treated specially and not be isolated or discriminated against. They need to interact and socialize with their peers both at school and in their residential communities. This reflects the concept of child-centered and friendly education. Every child, upon birth, has rights in various aspects of life, such as the right to life, the right to protection, growth, and development, as well as the right to express their opinions. Therefore, ensuring the proper implementation and protection of children's rights means creating a golden generation for Indonesia's bright future (Nurfadhillah, Fitri, et al., 2022).

Inclusive education programs have been implemented to cater to the needs of every child, ensuring that their individual needs are met. These programs are not only targeted toward children with special needs but also for all children, as every child inherently possesses unique characteristics, traits, and diversities. Inclusive education is one of the programs designed to address discrimination in the field of education. teachers play a crucial role in inclusive practices at schools, as they have direct communication with both special needs and non-specialist students. A teacher is expected to create a classroom environment that is not only welcoming but also fosters understanding among all students, enabling them to communicate and interact with one another. Inclusive practices present a new challenge for school leaders as well (Yunita, Suneki, and Wakhyudin 2019).

In Indonesia, inclusion provides opportunities for children with disabilities and other children who cannot attend school due to various reasons that hinder them from accessing education, such as the distance to special needs schools (SLB) being far, having to work to support their families, or other factors like living in remote areas, conflicts, or natural disasters. Inclusive schools aim to offer equal opportunities for all students to optimize their potential and meet their learning needs through inclusive education programs (Tyas Pratiwi, et al., 2022). In Indonesia, inclusive education is held starting from elementary school. According to the Education Unit for Providing Inclusive Education (SPPPI) in 2021, there are 17,134,511 districts/cities that have implemented inclusive education at the elementary level (Ni'mah et al. 2022). The success of inclusive education in teaching children with disabilities is influenced by several factors, such as perspectives, school policies, cooperation and coordination between regular teachers and special educators, as well as the teaching abilities of the teachers (Lalak Muslimin and Muqowim, 2021).

Based on the above review, the purpose of this study was to find out how the independent curriculum was implemented in the inclusion class at SDN Gadang 3 Malang City and what types of children with special needs were at SDN Gadang 3 Malang City.

METHOD

The type of research conducted is qualitative descriptive research aimed at describing the implementation of the independent curriculum for students with special needs at SDN Gadang 3 in Malang City. The research was conducted at SDN Gadang 3 in Malang City on May 29, 2023. The procedure involved providing a letter of introduction to the school principal, followed by conducting interviews with the relevant parties, including the 5th-grade teacher who also handles students with special needs.

The observations used in this study were to explore the implementation of the independent curriculum and the learning strategies used by students. Instruments used are as follows.

Table 1. Observation Instruments

No.	Indicator
1	Admission of children with special needs
2	Class placement for children with special needs
3	Learning strategies and media
4	Material used
5	Means used

6	Assessment process
7	The role of accompanying teachers and shadow teachers

Source: processed by researchers

In conducting the interviews, in-depth interviews were used with the informants. This was done to ensure that the researcher obtained comprehensive information regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum for students with special needs.

Table 2. Interview instruments

No	Indicator
1	The task of the accompanying class teacher (GPK)
2	Analysis of the types of children with special needs
3	Implementation of Kumer (Merdeka Curriculum) on students
4	Supporting factors for class inclusion
5	Inclusion class inhibiting factors

Source: Processed by researchers

The documentation used is in the form of student test result data. Data analysis techniques used in this research are data collection techniques, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS

SDN Gadang 3 is located at Jl. Raya Gadang No. 12, Gadang, Sukun Subdistrict, Malang City, East Java Province (65149). SDN Gadang 3 is one of the elementary schools in Malang that accepts students with special needs. The school has been accommodating students with special needs for 7 years. The admission of students with special needs at SDN Gadang 3 is not limited in number. However, in the academic year 2022-2023, there are 6 students with special needs, which are in grade 3 with autism, grade 4 with speech delay, and grade 5 with dyslexia, who are studying at SDN Gadang 3. The procedure implemented by SDN Gadang 3 for students with special needs in grades 3, 4, and 5 is tailored to each student's grade level. The strategies used by the class teachers to teach students with special needs vary, as they are adjusted to the characteristics of each student. One of the confirmed strategies applied is to explain using simple words and clarify the pronunciation so that it can be understood by all students, both general students and

students with special needs. However, there are differences in the materials taught to students with special needs compared to other students. For example, while general students are learning multiplication, students with special needs may still be working on addition of numbers. Therefore, the class teachers strive to simplify the learning process. In case students encounter difficulties in completing assignments or worksheets, the class teachers provide more in-depth guidance. The 5th-grade class teacher stated that there are no specific teaching modules exclusively for students with special needs; they use the same materials as other general students.

There are several types of students with special needs at SDN Gadang 3, including learning disabilities, speech delay, autism, and dyslexia. Due to the conditions of these students, the school requires the use of a shadow teacher in the learning process. A shadow teacher is a teacher who assists the main teacher throughout the entire learning process, from design to evaluation (Marwiyati and Kinasih, 2022). The procedure involves parents seeking a companion teacher to handle students with special needs. The shadow teacher involves parents in the classroom to provide specialized assistance while they explain the materials to the students with special needs. The shadow teacher's guidance is not limited to the school setting but also extends to the student's home to ensure the learning objectives are maximally achieved. Unlike the 3rd-grade class, in the 4th-grade class, the type of students with special needs is those with speech delay. Speech delay refers to a condition where someone experiences a delay in speaking or language development.

The procedure used for assessing students with special needs involves them participating in regular classroom learning activities. However, during the midterm and final semester examinations, these students will receive specific questions prepared by the Special Education Team (GPK) responsible for creating the exam questions for schools in each city. The team will distribute these special exam questions to all schools with students with special needs. Nevertheless, the school also has the authority to incorporate other assessment methods to evaluate the learning outcomes of students with special needs, as they have different needs compared to other typical students.

Among the many facilities and resources that support the implementation of inclusive classes at SDN Gadang 3, there are some shortcomings, namely the absence of a formally established inclusive class with a dedicated shadow teacher. Consequently, the

inclusive class has not been fully realized as intended. However, despite these limitations, the teachers remain diligent in teaching the students, providing the best possible services to ensure that the rights of the students are upheld. The teachers' commitment is not hindered by these constraints, and they strive to deliver quality education to all students, including those with special needs.

DISCUSSION

Autism is a brain development disorder and a generalized disorder characterized by impaired social communication, delays in communication, play, language, behavioral, sensory and emotional disturbances, social communication, non-emotional disturbances, and repetitive behavior (Syaputri and Afriza 2022). Autism can arise during pregnancy. In the first trimester, the causes usually include infections (such as toxoplasmosis, rubella, Candida, etc.), exposure to heavy metals, additives (such as MSG, preservatives, dyes), or other medications. Additionally, an overgrowth of fungi in the child's gut due to excessive use of antibiotics can lead to leaky gut syndrome and incomplete digestion of casein and gluten (Amanulla, 2022). Children with autism are characterized by social difficulties. They often appear engrossed in their own world, making it challenging to communicate with people around them. At times, children with autism may seem less responsive or sensitive to their feelings or those of others (Lestari et al., 2023).

Speech delay is a condition where an individual experiences a delay in speaking or language development. According to (Suriadi and Mursidin, 2020), speech delay is a condition in which a child encounters difficulty in expressing feelings or desires to others. This is evident in the difficulty to articulate words clearly and hinders communication patterns with others that are not age-appropriate due to limited vocabulary mastery. In such a condition, a person can comprehend the speech of others but encounters challenges in uttering words or speaking. Individuals with speech delay tend to rely more on body movements to convey their intentions or inquire about something.

The signs of speech delay can be observed in children: 1) Not responding to sounds, 2) Delayed development, 3) Lack of interest in communication, 4) Difficulty following given commands, 5) Introducing uncommon words or phrases unlike other children of the same age, 6) Speaking at a slower pace compared to peers, 7) Difficulty

in understanding their own words even by family members, and 8) Struggling to comprehend adult speech (Fauzia, Wulan & Meiliawati, 2020).

Many factors can affect speech delay, as research conducted by (Aurelia, Rahminawati, and Inten 2022) stated that the factors underlying the child's speech delay consist of internal and external factors. Internal factors that affect speech delays in children include genetics, physical disabilities, neurological dysfunction, prematurity, and gender. External factors that affect children with speech delays are the order/number of children, the mother's education, economic status, family activities, and bilingualism.

Dyslexia is a learning disability in children that manifests itself as an inability to read, not caused by vision, hearing, intelligence, or language skills, but rather by a disruption in the brain processes involved in receiving information. Dyslexia is a language-based learning disorder in children that causes difficulties in understanding words or sentences when writing, reading, and spelling (Safitri, Ali, and Latipah, 2022).

The causes of dyslexia are divided into several factors. 1) Biological factors, such as a family history of dyslexia, problematic pregnancies, and significant health issues. 2) Cognitive factors, including language articulation patterns and lack of phonological awareness in individuals. 3) Behavioral factors, such as social relationship problems resulting in stress, learning disabilities, and motor impairments (Nurfadhillah, Saridevita, et al., 2022). Students with mild dyslexia experience developmental obstacles, leading to delays in understanding the material and falling behind their peers. Students with dyslexia may exhibit similar behavior to their non-dyslexic peers, with the main difference lying in their ability to grasp the material. Children with dyslexia can attend both regular schools and special schools. If a child with reading difficulties can keep up with the class and their emotional development remains unaffected, they can continue learning in a regular school setting. However, if these challenges significantly impact their academic performance and even result in frequent absences, it may be more appropriate for them to receive targeted support and intervention in a special school setting (A'yun and Latipah, 2022).

Every form of effort made by the accompanying teacher certainly comes with challenges and facilitations. One of the difficulties experienced by teachers when teaching children with special needs is the difficulty in delivering the learning materials, as these

children may have trouble understanding what the teacher is conveying (Lafiana, Witono, and Affandi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN Gadang 3 has been following government regulations for admitting students with special needs precisely seven years ago. The application of inclusive classes at SDN Gadang 3 is packaged in a way that is not significantly different from other regular students. The teaching modules used are also standardized with those used for other regular students. However, for students with special needs, the learning materials are simplified. In addition to explaining the materials, teachers incorporate visual aids to stimulate the student's enthusiasm, such as showing various educational videos relevant to the subject matter. The use of visual aids has proven to increase the student's enthusiasm. With the existence of inclusive classes, it is hoped that all students can interact with others regardless of their physical condition and that students with special needs can experience the same level of interaction as other regular students. The assessment process for students with special needs is done through mid-semester and end-semester exams provided directly by the Special Needs Education (GPK) Team in each respective city.

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