

Producing Quality Educators for Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

Education is the right of all Indonesian citizens, including children with special needs. Government Regulation No 17 of 2010, Law No 8 of 2016, Law No 20 of 2003 and Law No 14 of 2005 clearly state that education is the right of all citizens. This research aims to provide insight to prospective educators of children with special needs in order to have good criteria and quality. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method through *library research*. Data analysis is carried out through literature reviews of books, scientific articles, and other sources relevant to the research subject. The result of this research is the formulation of a theory that explains the criteria for becoming a qualified educator of children with special needs. Among the skills and abilities that must be mastered by prospective educators of children with special needs include: a) general ability, b) basic ability, and c) specific ability. In addition, there are strategies that can be applied in inclusive education.

Keywords: *Educator Criteria; Children with Special Needs*

INTRODUCTION

An educator in the learning process has an important role in creating the right and comfortable situation in the classroom. The accuracy of adjusting conditions has a positive impact on the development of learners. Being an educator for normal students will certainly be different from dealing with students who have special needs. If you do not have the skills, patience, and persistence, it will be difficult to provide learning to these special students (Aulia Rasyada, 2022).

An educator is obliged to provide opportunities for students with special needs to be able to develop their potential through education at school. Every child, both normal and special, must have weaknesses or difficulties in understanding the subject matter. However, every child has something in common that greatly affects their development. This similarity is the 'golden age' or the golden *age* of children, during which the role of

parents including a teacher has an important role in shaping their intellect and character (Ramandhini et al., 2023).

Inclusive education requires a holistic approach in order to ensure that all learners, including children with special needs, get their right to quality education (Maftuh in Mahessa et al., 2024). In this context, holistic education is needed to ensure that all aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, affective and child development are fully met and supported (Budianto, 2023). Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities emphasizes that persons with disabilities have the right to inclusive education (Riyadi, 2021). Likewise, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers emphasize the right to equal education for all Indonesian citizens, which includes children with special needs. Then in Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning the management and implementation of education mandates the implementation of inclusive education at all levels of education (Fernandes, 2018).

Special education institutions (special schools) are education that is devoted to students who have abnormalities both in physical, emotional, mental, and social. In teaching and learning activities in SLB, the teacher's function is not only to provide lessons through lectures, but also to be responsible for optimizing services at school for children with special needs (Wardah, 2019). Educators who face children with special needs are required to have more abilities, especially in terms of designing and selecting teaching materials, as well as teaching strategies that suit the needs of these special students.

Learners with special needs have difficulties in aligning their abilities with the learning process. Even some teachers are still unable to identify and guide special learners to be able to achieve optimal learning. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that the role of the teacher is very influential in the learning process of children with special needs (Aziz et al., 2016). Apart from the significant role of parents, teachers also have a role in the success of the intelligence of children with special needs. However, the problem is that most educators or teachers do not know deeply about how that role should be carried out (Aulia Rasyada, 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to comprehensively study the role of teachers who educate children with special needs. Thus, efforts to produce quality educators for children with special needs can be achieved.

METHODS

The method used in this research is qualitative research and *library research* method. The analysis used is descriptive analysis, thus producing descriptive data. As with the opinion of Bodgan and Taylor, that the result of a study using a qualitative design is descriptive information data (Moleong, 2021). The reference sources taken come from data that has been collected from the literature search process by analyzing theories based on books, journal articles, proceedings, and others that have themes relevant to the

research subject. So, the data sources that researchers use in this study are data from literature analysis taken from scientific journals that can be accessed easily via the web and coupled with books that have been prepared in advance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Getting to know children with special needs and their classification

According to (Ministry of Education, 2004) children with special needs are children who significantly experience physical, mental, social, emotional, or intellectual abnormalities or deviations in the process of growth and development compared to other children their age so that they need special services and education. Then according to Bachri, children with special needs show physical, intellectual, and emotional characteristics that are lower or higher than normal children their age or in other words outside normal standards in society, so that they experience obstacles in terms of social, personal, and educational activities (Mardiansah et al., 2024). Thus, it can be concluded that children with special needs are children with special characteristics that are different from children in general without always showing mental, emotional, or physical disabilities.

According to (Desiningrum, 2016) the number of children with special needs in Indonesia continues to grow from year to year. There is no official data from the government regarding the number of children with special needs in Indonesia. However, the latest data recorded 1,544,184 children with 330,764 children (21.42%) in the age range of 5-18 years. Of these, only 85,737 children with special needs are recorded as attending school. This means that there are still 245,027 children with special needs who do not get their rights, namely school education, both special and inclusive schools (Mardiansah et al., 2024). So this is still a pr for the government and educational institutions to equalize education for all Indonesian citizens.

Then according to the IDEA (*Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Amendments*) published in 1997 in (Desiningrum, 2016), in general, children with special needs are classified as follows:

a. Children with Physical Disorders

Visually impaired, are children whose sense of sight does not function (*blind/low vision*) which functions as a channel for receiving information like ordinary people. and deaf, are children who lose all or only part of their hearing function resulting in weak hearing or unable to communicate verbally. Tunalaras, are children who have abnormalities or defects in movement (bones, joints, or muscles).

b. Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Tunagrahita, is a child who clearly experiences obstacles in intellectual development that cause retardation far below the average so that it is difficult to do academic, communication, and social tasks. *Slow learners* are children who have intellectual potential slightly below normal but not up to the classification of tunagrahita,

usually these children have an IQ range between 70-90. Autism, is a child who has a developmental disorder caused by a nervous system disorder, as a result of which this child has difficulty in social interaction, behavior, and communication. Then there are gifted children, who are children who have extraordinary talents beyond their age, so that to maximize and optimize their talents, special services and education are needed.

c. Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Tunalaras, which are children who have difficulty in adjusting and behaving with the prevailing norms. Tunawicara, are children who have voice disorders, speech fluency, or disorders in articulation (pronunciation) which result in deviations in language form, content, and language function. Hyperactivity, psychologically hyperactivity is a behavioral disorder caused by *neurobiological* malfunction with the main symptoms being unable to control movement and focus attention.

Special Needs Children Category

Quoting from the book '*Education and Guidance of Children with Special Needs*' (Atmaja, 2018) Children with special needs are divided into two categories, including: a) children with special needs are temporary (temporary), b) children with special needs are permanent (permanent). Regarding these two categories, it is described in more detail as follows:

a. Children with special needs are temporary (temporary)

Children who experience learning and developmental barriers caused by external factors. For example, children who are victims of rape, children who experience emotional disturbances caused by this trauma are temporary, but can become permanent if not handled properly. Children with these conditions do not need special education services, but they need education that is tailored to the obstacles they experience.

b. Children with special needs are permanent

The view of children with special needs has a broader meaning than the concept of *exceptional children*. In line with this change in perspective, exceptional children are no longer seen from their disability, but from the needs or obstacles they experience. Therefore, exceptional children are also part of children with special needs. In other words, it is not a substitute term for the term extraordinary children.

Children with permanent special needs are children who experience obstacles in learning and the cause of these obstacles comes from internal factors or from the condition of the disability they experience. Examples include children who lose visual function, hearing function, intelligence disorders, emotional disorders, social disorders, motor disorders, and other disorders. In other words, children with permanent special needs are children with disabilities.

Criteria for Qualified Special Needs Child Educators

Being an educator of children with special needs certainly requires special skills. It is not enough just to teach general subject matter, but also requires a personal approach

to children. Each child has a different character and *special needs* category. Therefore, educators for children with special needs are expected to have other added values, especially when approaching their students. Among the added values or abilities that must be mastered by educators of children with special needs as quoted from the book '*Creating Quality Educators for Children with Special Needs*' (Shofia, 2020), include:

1. General Ability; the main abilities that must be possessed by prospective educators of children with special needs, namely a) having a personality and religion, b) having an attitude and actualization as a citizen, c) being able to develop the profession, d) understanding the basic concepts of curriculum and its development, e) understanding group or individual learning patterns, f) being able to work together with other professions that are bound.
2. Basic Ability; abilities that include the basic sciences needed by prospective educators of children with special needs, including: a) being able to identify children with special needs, b) being able to assess children with special needs, c) being able to design, implement, and evaluate learning for children with special needs, d) being able to design, implement, and evaluate guidance and counseling programs for children with special needs, e) being able to carry out extraordinary management, f) being able to develop a curriculum according to the abilities and needs of children with special needs, g) knowing medical aspects and their implications for the teaching process of children with special needs.
3. Specific Ability; special expertise for children with special needs according to their specialty. It is a very vital skill and must be possessed by educators of children with special needs, including: a) being able to modify behavior, b) mastering learning concepts and skills for children who have visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual impairments, limb disorders, behavioral and social disorders, focus disorders in learning.

By mastering the expertise as described above, an educator who handles children with special needs can carry out the process of teaching and learning activities optimally and better. In addition, a close relationship will be created between educators and students because educators fully understand the character and needs of their students. This is because children with special needs have features that differ from one another. This requires an understanding of each child with special needs, both an understanding of the person, problem, or difficulty, as well as an understanding of the teaching material that will be delivered to him.

Implementation Strategy for Inclusive Education

Various research results have supported the ideology of inclusion so that it can be applied optimally. Various efforts have been made by various parties to reduce the gap between written policies and the reality in the field. The guiding principles of strategies that must be considered in implementing inclusive education include equality, relevance, access, effectiveness and efficiency. Based on a review of various literatures, strategies that are being carried out to overcome gaps and optimize inclusive education are by

improving the quality of *in-service training* (INSET) for inclusive educators, including *awareness programmes, school-based professional development programmes, family support*, commitment from the government to provide some of the budgetary resources for inclusive education in the budget plan, cooperation with *stakeholders, cooperation* and collaboration regionally, nationally and internationally (Sari & Hendriani, 2021).

Then to create a conducive environment in inclusive learning requires the participation of various parties. Teachers are the ones who have the main role in the inclusive education process. Therefore, without cooperation and assistance from schools, the implementation of inclusive education will not run optimally (Rusmono, 2020). Teachers' understanding of inclusive education is the main point that underlies how a teacher will be aware of the differences and diversity of their students. To gain this ability and understanding, a teacher must be given *training* related to this matter (Sanagi, 2016). To address these needs, schools are obliged to facilitate educators by bringing in experts who can handle students with special needs conditions. So hopefully, teachers will learn directly from these experts in how to handle these special students.

The co-teaching method is a teaching method that can be applied by inclusive education institutions. This method is a form of teaching that is carried out by two teachers in one class. Through the *co-teaching* method, teachers can share information about the learning process in the classroom, and reduce the burden on teachers in the classroom because learning is done together. If educators who teach can work well together, it will be able to reduce the burden felt. In addition, there are several other strategies that can be applied to optimize inclusive education, *including awareness programs, working with teams that have resource centers that support inclusive education, and government involvement in organizing training funds and funds to build facilities that support the implementation of inclusive education*. By applying these strategies, schools as educational institutions can participate in creating an inclusion-friendly environment where students with special needs no longer have to hide their disabilities, but celebrate diversity together with normal students in general (Ikramullah, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Education is the right of all citizens, including children with special needs. Therefore, equitable education is a necessity. Providing education to children with special needs requires special efforts and abilities that must be possessed by educators. Thus, this needs to be considered both by the government, society, and the teachers themselves. Through this paper, it is hoped that it can help an inclusive education teacher in understanding the abilities that must be mastered and strategies for applying inclusive education. Among the abilities that inclusive education teachers must have and master are general abilities (general ability), basic abilities (basic ability) and specific abilities (specific ability).

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