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The benefits of inclusive education in terms of the character perspective of regular students in elementary schools

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ABSTRACT

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The implementation of inclusive education does not only have a positive impact on children with special needs. This study aims to identify the benefits of implementing inclusive education in elementary schools in term of the character perspective of regular students in elementary school. This research was conducted at Primary School in Batola with research sources consisting of six inclusion coordinators, six regular teachers, six special assistant teachers. and six shadow teachers of children with special needs and also six parents. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive method. Data collection techniques using interviews, observation, documentation and triangulation then analyzed using an interactive model from Miles and Huberman. The results of the research show that: (1) regular students are able to appreciate the differences, (2) willing to invite students with special needs to participate in every class activity, (3) have a great curiosity to ask questions regarding the actual condition of students with special needs, (4) give good appreciation to students with special needs when they show their talents and abilities in public, (5) willing to be invited to make friends and lend their belongings to help students with special needs, (6) if something happens that is considered difficult for students with special needs regular students will immediately help, (7) regular students are able to look after and protect students with special needs. Based on this study, the presence of children with special needs in inclusive education can also be a means to develope character education for regular students.



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Introduction

Inclusive education is an innovative and strategic educational approach to expand access to education for all people, including children with special needs. In a broader context, inclusive education can also be interpreted as a form of education reform that emphasizes anti-discrimination, openness, and mutual respect. In addition, the implementation of education with this system also encourages improving the quality of education, strategic efforts to complete the nine-year compulsory education as proclaimed by the government and efforts to change public attitudes towards children and people with special needs (Ilahi & Rose, 2013).

Inclusive education is a humanist paradigm and educational philosophy that can accommodate all students according to their needs. In addition, inclusive education is a non-discriminatory education that provides services to all students regardless of their physical, mental, intellectual, social, emotional, economic, and social conditions. gender, ethnicity, culture, place of residence, language, and so on (Kustawan, 2013)

One of the important components in the process of implementing inclusive education is the role of students. Each implementation of learning, students are arranged in such a way that students can participate in realizing educational goals according to the needs of the times. All students without exception must be actively involved in managing learning activities so that they are able to create good school environmental conditions (Ilahi & Rose, 2013)

The main mission of education is to minimize learning barriers and meet the learning needs of students. Every student is valued for his existence, his self-esteem is grown, his motivation is developed and accepted as is, so that every student will develop optimally in line with his potential. Through inclusive education, students can live and learn together and benefit not only students with special needs, but also regular students. Inclusion can be seen as a process to address and respond to diversity among all individuals through increasing participation in learning, culture and society and reducing exclusion both in and from educational activities (Sukinah, 2010).

Inclusive education is a human right and is a good education to increase social tolerance. Some things that can be considered, among others: (a) all children have the right to learn together, (b) the existence of children is not to be discriminated against, separated, isolated due to disability or experiencing difficulties in learning, (c) none there is no provision to exclude children from education, (d) research has shown that children get better abilities, academically and socially in an inclusive learning environment, (e) there is no single learning method and assistance in special schools that cannot conducted in inclusive schools (f) all children need education that will be able to help them to make relationships and prepare for a decent life in the life of a diverse society, (g) inclusive has the potential to minimize worries and build, foster loyalty in friendship and build an attitude of understanding and respect, (h) the target of inclusive education is not only children with special needs, but also all students in schools (Sukinah, 2010).

Based on this, it can be seen that if inclusive education is not held in schools, there will be a chance that public schools will not open for children with special needs, causing barriers in the world of education. Based on this, basically the implementation of inclusive education does not only have a positive impact on children with special needs. Moreover, the presence of children with special needs in inclusive education can also be a means to develope character education for regular students.

Character education through inclusive schools is not only limited to knowledge, but is also oriented to the cultivation of morals, ethical values, aesthetics, noble character and so on. Character education is not merely to teach what is right and what is wrong to the child, but more than that character education inculcate the habit (habituation) of the good that students understand, able to feel, and want to do good. Character education is a mission similar to moral education (Kamaruddin, 2012).

Character education has the same essence and meaning as moral education. The goal is to shape the child's personality so that he becomes a good human being, a citizen, and a good citizen. Character education is a system of inculcating character values to school members which includes components of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and actions to implement these values. Character education in schools, all components (educational stakeholders) must be involved, including educational components which include curriculum content, learning and assessment processes, handling or managing subjects, school management, implementation of co-curricular activities or activities (Ramli, 2003).

There are 18 (eighteen) values in character education according to the Ministry of National Education, such as religious, honest, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the homeland, appreciate achievement, friendly/communicative, loves peace, likes to read, cares about the environment, cares about social, and responsible (Baginda, 2018).

According to Piaget, children aged 7-11 years experience a stage of concrete operational development. This level is the beginning of rational thinking. This means that children have logical operations that they can apply to concrete problems. When faced with a conflict between thoughts and perceptions, children in this period choose to make logical decisions and not perceptual decisions like preoperational children. So it means, character education is ideal to be implanted at the elementary school level (Ramli, 2003).

There are three stages to go through and accomplished by every student according to (Fitriasari, 2011) such as: 1) Moral Knowing. The objectives are students are able to distinguish the noble moral values and moral character; understand logically and rationally (not doctrinal or dogmatic) the importance of moral values and the danger of logical character; 2) Moral LovingIntended to foster a sense of love and takes the value of noble character. Target student teacher is an emotional dimension, the heart, the soul, not the ratio or logic.

Teachers touch the emotions of students that growing awareness, noble desires and needs.; 3) Moral Doing. Students practice the noble moral values in everyday behavior such as, polite, friendly, honest, compassionate, and so on (Fitriasari, 2011)

According to (Kusuma Dewi, 2017) from the results of his research that the implementation of inclusive education programs at the Rumah Citta Labschool is carried out by providing the widest opportunity for students with special needs (ABK) and normal students to interact with each other. Aspects of student development will be mutually stimulated by the presence of peer tutors and the cultivation of character values by habituation in learning. The implementation of inclusive education at the Rumah Citta Labschool also has a positive impact on students, so that students at the Rumah Citta Labschool want to help each other and play together with students with special needs, recognize and appreciate differences; have responsibility and self-confidence, and have social skills.

Based on all of the statement, this study will dig deeper into the benefits of inclusive education programs on the perspective of character of regular students in elementary schools. The thing that make this study different is that, in this study researchers are trying to discover the benefits of the implementation of inclusive education in term of regular student as a main object that receive the advantage of the program.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive method, conducted at elementary school in Batola. This research uses purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. The primary data sources used were six resource persons as the inclusion coordinators, six regular teachers, six shadow teachers, and six parents. Data collection techniques using interviews, observation, documentation and triangulation then analyzed using an interactive model from Miles and Huberman with steps of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing and verification.

Results and Discussions

This study focuses on seven character values of regular students in inclusive schools, namely in the form of increasing tolerance, increasing democracy, increasing curiosity towards children with special needs, increasing respect for achievement, increasing friendship/communicativeness, increasing social awareness, and increasing responsibility for children with special needs. The analysis was carried out based on data that had been collected through interviews with resource persons. The following is an explanation of the benefits of inclusive education for regular students for character building.

Increased Tolerance for Students with Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers that inclusive education for regular students will create a sense of empathy, assuming that everything is the same and not criticizing each other, especially there are special assistant teachers so that they can help communicate with student with special needs. The results of interviews conducted with special supervisors showed that regular children can learn to accept differences, be able to blend in in the classroom, arise a sense of wanting to protect, and can help the difficulties experienced by children with special needs.

Based on the results of interviews with regular parents also said that it is very beneficial if regular children study together with student with special needs because regular students learn to respect each other. The following are the results of the narrative from a regular parent named EK.

"Kalau menurut ulun lah sangat bermanfaat jadi siswa normal bisa saling belajar menghargai dengan kondisi ABK. Jadi kada bekawan lawan yang normal haja tapi lawan anak yang kada normal". (Transkip wawancara dengan orang tua reguler no.1) 24 Mei2019).

Similar to the results of interviews conducted with regular students that by studying with student with special needs in class, they can make friends with everyone in the class without choosing friends, including ABK.

Democratic Improvement of Students with Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers, with inclusive education, regular students seem to get along as usual with children in general, but the statement by the class teacher named R shows that his communication and skills are still lacking. However, based on the results of interviews with special assistant teachers that there are some students who accept and do not accept but they do not mind the existence of student with special needs so that if there are any activities in the class they will participate in

playing a role, for example, there are activities to lead prayers and clean the class they are also given a good opportunity. Similar to the results of interviews conducted with parents and regular students so that children with special needs get the same rights so that they can blend in in the class and include children with special needs in every class activity. The following are the results of the regular student named LA.

"Amunnya ada kegiatan apa aja di kelas tu harus diajak jua bebuhan ABK nya". (Transkip wawancara dengan siswa reguler no.2) 24 Mei 2019).

Curiosity towards Students with Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers, with inclusive education for regular students they sometimes have curiosity but their curiosity is not continuous, only briefly, which often asks new people but if they already know the condition of their special needs children it doesn't matter anymore. The opinion of the informant named A, they look normal and even curiosity about the student with special needs is still not visible. However, it is different from the results of interviews with special assistant teachers that regular children's curiosity about children with special needs increases because they always ask questions about children with special needs in class if they look different but after they find out it does not make regular students stay away from children with special needs, for example when there is learning that is not the same as regular children then they will ask why this can happen. Following the result of interviews with shadow teacher, named T.

"Sejauh ini siswa kelas 1 saat dalam kelas mereka selalu mencari informasi mengenai apa itu ABK, ketika ABK menangis dan tidak mau diam mereka pasti bertanya kenapa mereka seperti itu. sedikit banyaknya mereka menggali informasi apa itu ABK dan kenapa hal tersebut bisa terjadi." (Transkip wawancara dengan guru pendamping khusus no.3) 24 Mei 2019).

This statement is also in line with the results of interviews conducted with regular parents that can stimulate regular children to understand how the actual condition of student with special needs is. In line with statements with regular students because they do not know much about the condition of student with special needs so they have more curiosity.

Increasing Appreciation for Achievement of Student With Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers that with inclusive education for regular students they will give a good appreciation and even feel happy and will support, for example, when the class 6 farewell event the student with special needs perform several performances such as dancing and singing, regular students really appreciate achievements what the crew had done. The following results of the narrative of a regular teacher named RA.

"Sangat menghargai sekali, contoh saat perpisahan ada anak ABK yang tampil dengan beberapa keahliannya bahkan dari siswa reguler ada yang tidak mampu mengerjakan itu, misalnya dari segi menyanyi sangat pandai ada tariantarian." (Transkip wawancara no.4) 25 Mei 2019).

It is the same with the results of interviews conducted with special assistant teachers that they will give appreciation if there is talent that children with special needs can show to regular children. In line with the results of interviews with regular parents that we also have to know that student with special needs also has potency so that regular students must also know this so that the potential of student with special needs is also explored and the results of interviews with regular students that although they are student with special needs but not all of them always have obstacles.

Friendly / Communicative with Students with Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers that with inclusive education for regular students it will be seen that there is a communication, for example, when children with special needs do not have erasers or pencils, they will automatically lend, besides that when sports lessons there are activities for some of the children with special needs to relax, so they will walk slowly then do not hesitate to regular children to help. The results of the interview are also in line with interviews with special assistant teachers that they are willing to help when student with special needs is in trouble and even they do not hesitate to actively communicate and invite student with special needs to play together. The following are the results of the narrative of a special assistant teacher named AL.

"Contohnya saja banyak siswa reguler yang aktif berkomunikasi dengan siswa berkebutuhan khusus, dampak positifnya bahwa siswa reguler memiliki komunikasi yang bercampur dengan rasa keingintahuannya sehingga anak reguler sering memulai pembicaraan. Ini bermanfaat untuk meningkatkan rasa percaya diri anak berkebutuhan khusus." (Transkip wawancara no.5) 28 Mei 2019).

Similar to the results of interviews conducted with regular parents that regular students if mixed with student with special needs then their friendship will expand not always with children in general. The results of interviews with regular students also said that it doesn't matter if you make friends with anyone, including friends with student with special needs.

Cultivating Sense of Caring toward Students with Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers that with inclusive education for regular students there is an increase in social awareness, for example, they want to cooperate and on Mondays during the marching ceremony, regular students will help student with special needs to find and tidy up the appropriate rows. The following is a narrative from a regular teacher named RA.

"Bagus sekali misalnya dari segi waktu upacara secara baris berbaris, mencarikan barisan yang cocok atau tempat yang cocok." (Transkip wawancara no.6) 25 Mei 2019).

This statement is also in line with the results of interviews conducted with special assistant teachers that they are available to when shadow teacher is not in class to provide protection for student with special needs and immediately report to shadow teacher if they are running out of class. Shadow teacher also gave an understanding at the beginning that they should be able to appreciate the differences, they should be more grateful for the advantages that student with special needs does not have and provide more motivation. The results of interviews with parents and regular students also said that regular students have empathy to help others if student with special needs has difficulties.

Responsibilities to Students with Special Needs

Based on the results of interviews conducted with regular teachers that with the existence of inclusive education for regular students, there is a responsibility towards student with special needs. Regular students want to look after, help out of class, and if the class teacher is in a meeting, the class teacher will give directions to regular students to help student with special need who are having difficulties. In line with, the results of interviews conducted with class assistant teachers because children with special needs are also part of the school community so that it is not only the responsibility of special assistant teachers, special assistant teachers and regular teachers but also a shared responsibility as well as regular students. When something is quite dangerous with student with special needs, the regular students in the class will immediately help even though there is no GPK at that time. It's the same with sports activities in the field when a crew member falls while running, he will immediately help. The following is the result of the narrative of the accompanying teacher named T.

"Anak luar biasa maka menjadi tanggung jawab bersama bukan hanya dari orang tua, kepala sekolah, guru kelas, guru pendamping khusus, akan tetapi juga menjadi tanggung jawab dari warga kelas saat berada di sekolahan. Saat GPK tidak selalu bisa mengawasi dan menjaga ABK disitulah peran dari siswa reguler mereka juga harus bisa memberikan perlindungan agar tidak terjadi bahaya kepada ABK." (Transkip wawancara no.7) 24 mei 2015).

That statement is also supported by the result of interviews which conducted with parents of regular student, that regular student is also must to protect student with special education especially to the autism students who often go out and potentially to go away. The interviews of the regular is also have a same result that they are willing to protect their special friends if any danger happen.

Character education teaches habitual ways of thinking and behaviors that help individuals to live and work together as a family, community, and state and help them to make decisions that can be accounted for. Characters that become mold as in The Six Pillars of Character issued by the Character Counts! Coalition (a project of The Joseph Institute of Ethics). Six types of characters are as follows: 1) Trustworthiness, the shape of the character that makes a person: integrity, honesty, and loyalty; 2) Fairness, shape the character that makes a person have an open mind and do not like to take advantage of others, ;3) Caring, the shape of the character that makes a person have a caring attitude and concern for others and the social conditions of the neighborhood, 4) Respect, the shape of the character that makes a person always appreciate and respect others; 5) Citizenship, the shape of the character that makes a person aware of the laws and regulations as well as care for the natural environment; 6) Responsibility, the form of the character that makes a person responsible, disciplined, and always do things as good as possible (Kamaruddin, 2012)

Some of what is reviewed from this research also absorbs from several characters that are sought to be developed by the government, namely (1) Religious; (2) Honest; (3) Tolerance; (4) Discipline; (5) Hard Work; (6) Creative; (7) Independent; (8) Democratic; (9) Curiosity; (10) National Spirit; (11) Love of the Motherland; (12) Rewarding Achievements; (13) Friendly or Communicative; (14) Peaceful Love; (15) Likes to Read; (16) Environmental Care; (17) Social Care; (18) Responsibility (Baginda, 2018).

Based on this, the researcher focuses on several possible characters that can be reviewed in order to identify the benefits of implementing inclusive education in elementary schools. Some of these characters include tolerance, democracy, curiosity, respect for achievement, communicative, friendly and responsible. This research was conducted in elementary schools providing inclusive education, it was carried out with the consideration that elementary school is the right level of education to identify the benefits of inclusive education in terms of the character possessed by regular students towards the presence of children with special needs in school.

This is in line with the level of age development according to Piaget, namely children aged 7-11 years experiencing a level of concrete operational development. This level is the beginning of rational thinking. This means that children have logical operations that they can apply to concrete problems. When faced with a conflict between thoughts and perceptions, children in this period choose to make logical decisions and not perceptual decisions like preoperational children (Ramli, 2003).

This level of development can support the development of student character in elementary schools which is implicitly embedded through the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools. The level of concrete operational development in elementary school students can serve as a basis for regular students in responding to school life that provides inclusive education. Armed with these characteristics, regular students can learn directly and capture the values of inclusive education and apply them in everyday life in the school environment.

By focusing from the seven characteristics, this study identified that regular students in elementary schools in Batola generally have a positive picture of characteristics, from the characteristics of tolerance it is known that the presence of students with special needs in inclusive schools encourages empathy for regular students. It also encourages regular students to accept differences so that they can unite without being picky about friends.

This is in line with the statement (Rahmawati & Fatmawati, 2016) that the school environment is a heterogeneous environment. Students from various backgrounds study together. Tolerance has a role to create mutual respect and appreciation in the midst of differences between students, in this case, regular students and children with special needs.

As for the democratic characteristics, there are still regular students who have not been able to accept children with special needs, this is related to the obstacles of regular students in communicating with their special friends. However, they do not mind the presence of children with special needs in school.

This is in line with the statement (Hasanah & Nurhamida, 2018), that the attitude that emerges from regular students towards students with special needs is what is seen and what is felt by regular students towards the limitations of students with special needs both physically, socially-emotionally and intelligence. In this case, regular students can show an attitude in the form of a positive attitude or a negative attitude. The positive attitude that exists in regular students is that regular students will tend to accept the presence of students with special needs with some physical, social-emotional and intelligence deficiencies, so that when students with special needs experience difficulties, regular students will always be willing to help and care about the shortcomings of students with special needs. On the other hand, if the attitude that exists in regular students with special needs with special needs, regular students will reject and cannot accept students with special needs with special needs, regular students will reject and cannot accept students with special needs with special needs, regular students will reject and cannot accept students with special needs with their physical, social-emotional and intelligence deficiencies so that what is done is to avoid and reject in their social environment.

The third character that is reviewed from this research is the curiosity that regular students have about the existence of children with special needs in school. The curiosity possessed by regular students at elementary schools in Batola is the urge to find out about the condition of children with special needs, even though it is not done continuously. This is done when regular students see something different both from children with special needs and from the learning services provided. The curiosity that is fostered through the implementation of inclusive education is in line with the statement (Fauzi et al., 2018), that with high curiosity, students will learn more in order to meet the thirst for knowledge they want to know. Through their curiosity students will begin to learn and discover.

The fourth character is respect for achievement, this study found that regular students can support and appreciate the potential and achievements of children with special needs in school. This is in line with the definition of character appreciating achievement, namely the value of appreciating achievement can be seen from one's appreciation of someone else who excels. In appreciating the achievements of others, one can give praise and support so that the achievements obtained can be maintained. Values reward achievement with praise and support. (Kurniawati & Irsyadillah, 2018)

The fifth character is friendly and communicative, this study found that regular students were able to establish communication with children with special needs besides that they also did not hesitate to mingle to invite them to play together. In friendly activities, communicative encounters take place in which individuals interact with each other, pay attention to each other, enjoy talking, hanging out, and cooperating with others. There are interwoven and thriving hearts and feelings of peace-loving that enable people to express attitudes, words, and actions that cause others to feel happy and secure in their presence. (Pranata & Barus, 2019)

The sixth character is social care. The results of this study indicate that regular students are willing to provide protection for children with special needs when the special assistant teacher is not available. This indicates that regular students have the character of social care for children with special needs which is in line with the statement (Anggarini & Listyaningsih, 2020), namely social care is an action where the action is not just a thought or conscience. A person is said to have concern if the person looks at each other politely, is polite, is tolerant of various kinds of differences, does not hurt each other, is willing to pay attention to each other, is able to cooperate and loves fellow human beings.

The seventh character is responsibility. Based on the results of the study, it is known that regular students have realized that the existence of children with special needs in school is a shared responsibility. This is indicated by the efforts made by regular students to accept and carry out the mandate given by the teacher to look after and help children with special needs who have difficulty when the accompanying teacher or class teacher is not available.

This is of course in line with the definition of the character of responsibility, namely the attitude and behavior of a person to carry out his duties and obligations that he should do, towards himself, society, the environment (nature, social, and culture), the State and God Almighty. Indicators for an attitude of responsibility are submitting assignments on time, being independent (not cheating), focused, consistent, diligent, cooperative, grateful, and helping friends who have learning difficulties. (Ardila et al., 2017)

The formation of the character of regular students at Sekolah dasar di Batola through inclusive education is in line with the character-building factors according to (Sukinah, 2010), namely character formation is influenced by innate factors (nature) and environment (socialization or education-nurture). In this case, the character of regular students grows and is formed through the process of implementing inclusive education which encourages regular students to understand the situation and conditions around them so that they can determine the actions that should be taken.

In this case, the researcher indicates that the character shown by regular students is an implication of the implementation of inclusive education in schools. In other words, the character of regular students is formed due to environmental factors (socialization and education) carried out in the school environment.

However, based on research conducted by other researchers, the characters shown by regular students do not always show positive characters. This is shown in research which states that, the variations of various behavioral emergences depend on each school's condition and teachers' role in implementing inclusion. The teachers' role to condition a social atmosphere that encouraged inclusion was still dominant. It was shown by some statements that teacher strategies to provide value education were by giving examples or models of their own behavior and always hang out with their students. The focus of the teachers' role suggested that elementary school students have their own guidance of value that depends on the leading conditions beyond them. The variations of various behavioral emergences depend on each school's condition and teachers' role in implementing inclusion. The teachers' role to condition a social atmosphere that encouraged inclusion was still dominant. It was shown by some statements that teacher strategies to provide value education were by giving examples or models of their own guidance of value that depends on the leading conditions beyond them. The variations of various behavioral emergences depend on each school's condition and teachers' role in implementing inclusion. The teachers' role to condition a social atmosphere that encouraged inclusion was still dominant. It was shown by some statements that teacher strategies to provide value education were by giving examples or models of their own behavior and always hang out with their students. The focus of the teachers' role suggested that elementary school students have their own guidance of value that depends on the leading conditions beyond them (Sukinah, 2014)

Thus the implementation of inclusive education has a reciprocal relationship with the character of regular students in inclusive schools. The benefits for regular students and children with special needs are getting the same treatment and shaping them to have good character and add positive values for each individual, until finally forming a habit that is applied in everyday life (Rahmi et al., 2020).

Conclusions

The implementation of inclusive education has benefits for all students, not limited to children with special needs. This study focuses on the benefits of implementing inclusive education in primary schools in terms of the character possessed by regular students. Basically the implementation of inclusive education has a

reciprocal relationship to all students in the school. The implementation of inclusive education in schools encourages regular students to be able to directly mingle with friends who have special needs, so that it can be a stimulus for regular students to develop their character. The positive character possessed by regular students can be a provision for schools to continue the implementation of inclusive education. Unlike the case with other studies that tend to focus on children with special needs, this research was conducted with the main focus, namely benefits for regular students. The implication of this research is that the school environment that provides inclusive education will be required to provide more guidance and supervision to the character of regular students in responding to the implementation of inclusive education, considering that not all students can give a positive response directly.

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