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# Teacher Readinnes Of Inlussive Education in Merauke

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## ABSTRACT

Every child has the right to a quality and equitable education, regardless of background, ability, or special needs. However, the reality on the ground shows that not all children get equal opportunities to access education that suits their uniqueness. Inclusive education is an educational approach where all students, including children with special needs, learn together in the same school environment. This study aims to describe teachers' readiness to implement inclusive education in Merauke District. The research was conducted using descriptive and qualitative methods. The subjects of the study consisted of 129 primary school teachers from various grade levels from 60 primary schools spread across Merauke district. Data collection techniques include distributing Google Forms, interviews, and observations. The validity test was carried out by triangulating techniques by comparing the results of filling out Google Forms, interviews, and observations. The results showed (1) 75.2% or 97 teachers understood the meaning of inclusive education; (2) 85.3% or 110 teachers already had information about children with special needs; (3) 47.3% or 61 teachers expressed their readiness to accept children with disabilities in their schools, with the main reason being awareness of the rights of every child in education; however, (4) 100% or all teachers who were respondents had never attended training related to the implementation of inclusive education. As a result, teacher readiness is still very low.

**Keywords:** Teachers, Inclusive Education, Children with Special Needs

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to unlocking the future for every individual. Every child has the right to a quality and equitable education, regardless of background, ability, or special needs. However, the reality on the ground shows that not all children get equal opportunities to access education that suits their uniqueness. Some children may face learning difficulties, which can affect their academic development. This is what underlies the concept of inclusive education. Inclusive education can be traced to the struggle to realize equality and educational rights for all individuals, regardless of their differences [1]. Before the inclusion approach was implemented, education systems often segregated students based on ability, disability, or other characteristics. Inclusive education is a reaction to the problems and injustices faced by students with special needs or other differences in education [2].

Inclusive education is an educational approach in which all students, including children with special needs, learn together in the same school environment. The main goal of inclusive education is to eliminate all forms of discrimination, guarantee access for all students, and provide appropriate support to enable them to reach their full potential [3]. Inclusive education is an important step forward in ensuring the right to education for all individuals, regardless of their differences [4]. Through an inclusive approach, it is expected that every student can grow and develop optimally, become a positively contributing member of society, and reach their true potential.

Inclusive education values diversity and focuses on recognizing individual differences as a source of richness and learning progress. Therefore, teachers play an important role in creating an accepting and inclusive environment for all students by understanding different needs and learning styles [5]. Teachers have the responsibility to help all students, including those with learning difficulties, to develop their learning abilities

[6]. In inclusive education, teachers need to have a deep understanding of student diversity and inclusive teaching strategies [7]. Teachers need to have a good awareness of the range of special needs their students may have, including students with physical or learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, or other special needs. This awareness helps teachers identify challenges that students may face and adjust their approach according to their individualized needs [8].

For children with special needs, the formal learning process requires a more specialized design, starting from the objectives, strategies, media, and materials to the evaluation. Learning evaluation for children with special needs generally not only focuses on academic skills but also on developing intellectual and emotional intelligence [9].

Inclusive education is an evolving field, and teachers need to keep abreast of the latest developments and research on inclusive approaches. Teachers also need to get support from peers, school staff, and other professionals in creating an inclusive education environment [10]. Collaboration and teamwork help teachers solve challenges and find the best solutions for each student. In an inclusive environment, children with special needs are given additional support to ensure they can access the curriculum, participate in academic and social activities, and reach their full potential. Achieving successful inclusive education requires the support of the entire school community and the active involvement of all relevant parties [11]. With the right approach and strong commitment, inclusive education can be an effective means of creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all students [12].

In the learning process for children with special needs, teachers need very careful planning, starting from preparation, implementation, and evaluation of learning outcomes [13]. Not only teacher readiness, but the readiness of facilities and infrastructure is also, of course, very important in the implementation of inclusive education. One of the important things in implementing inclusive learning is the availability of special assistant teachers [14]. Until now, in all regular primary schools in Merauke district, there have been no special assistant teachers registered with the Merauke district education office. In fact, the presence of special assistant teachers is needed to support the implementation of learning.

Inclusive education is an educational approach that aims to provide access and opportunities for all individuals, including those with special needs, to learn together in the same educational environment as other children [15]. The concept focuses on social integration, diverse teaching, and valuing diversity. The goal of inclusive education is to create a learning environment that is welcoming, student-centered, and recognizes the uniqueness of each individual [16]. With this approach,

children with special needs are invited to learn together with other children who do not have special needs. In this case, teachers and education staff are trained to support all students with different levels of ability and learning styles.

Inclusive education in Merauke refers to the efforts of the government, schools and communities in Merauke, to introduce and strengthen teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, especially in children with special needs. The purpose of this study was to describe teachers' readiness in implementing inclusive education in Merauke district.

## **2. METHOD**

The research was conducted using a descriptive-qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative research only intends to describe a symptom without hypothesis testing [17]. This method was chosen because researchers will only describe the variables that are the focus of the research. The variable in question is teacher readiness in implementing inclusive education in Merauke District. The subjects of the study consisted of 129 primary school teachers from various grade levels from 60 primary schools spread across Merauke district. The selection of subjects was based on random sampling techniques given the limitations of researchers due to the vast area of Merauke Regency and the large number of primary schools in Merauke Regency. Data collection techniques include distributing Google Forms, interviews, and observations. The validity test was carried out by triangulating techniques by comparing the results of filling out Google Forms, interviews, and observations. The collected data were then analyzed, verified, reduced, and concluded. The focus of the research is on several points as follows: (1) teachers' understanding of the meaning of inclusive education; (2) teachers' understanding of children with special needs; (3) teachers' readiness to accept children with disabilities in their schools; and (4) training they have attended related to the implementation of inclusive education. The research focus was then described in several forms. The questions were distributed through a Google Form, and then the answers from the respondents were analyzed and confirmed through interviews and observations.

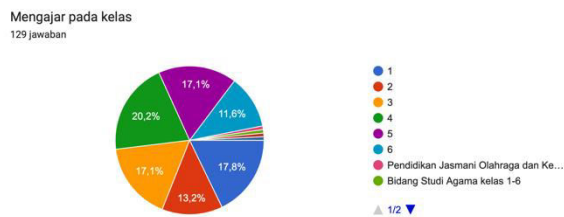
## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Research Results**

The study was conducted on 129 teachers as respondents. Respondents were spread across 60 regular primary schools in Merauke district. Teachers who became respondents were representatives of each school randomly from grade 1 to grade 6 teachers as well as several subject area teachers based on proportional

consideration. Data was obtained by distributing google forms. In addition, it was confirmed by conducting interviews and observations. The data that has been obtained is then processed by reducing the items that have similarities and those that are considered not representative. Respondents' answers that tended to be the same were summarized and those that did not represent the question were ruled out.

The distribution of respondents based on teaching duties is as follows.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of respondents based on teaching duties

Teachers' readiness to implement inclusive education focuses on several issues, including (1) teachers' understanding of the meaning of inclusive education; (2) teachers' understanding of children with special needs; (3) teachers' readiness to accept children with disabilities in their schools; and (4) training they have attended related to the implementation of inclusive education. The research focus was then described in several questions.

Data on the first focus point showed that most teachers (75.2%) already had knowledge and an overview of inclusive schools. While the rest (24.8%) stated that they did not have an understanding of what inclusive schools were. The understanding in question is an understanding of the definition and description of the implementation of inclusive education.

In the second point, most (85.3%) respondents stated that they already had an understanding of children with special needs. The rest (14.7%) stated that they did not yet have an understanding of children with special needs. This understanding is related to the types, classifications, and criteria for children with special needs.

In the third point, regarding readiness to teach children with disabilities in regular classrooms, only 47.3% stated that they were willing to teach children with disabilities in their school. The remaining 52.7% said they were not willing to teach children with disabilities in their classrooms. This was due to various considerations by the teachers. Both those who agreed and those who disagreed had reasons and considerations.

In the fourth point, regarding training that had been attended, most (86%) stated that they had never attended

any technical guidance at all on inclusive education or on children with special needs. Meanwhile, only a small proportion (14%) had attended training. However, in the confirmation process, it turned out that all teachers had never attended training or received technical guidance related to inclusive education and children with special needs. This will be explained further in the discussion chapter.

### 3.2 Discussion

Regarding teachers' understanding of the implementation of inclusive education in the first research focus point, information was obtained that most teachers (75.2%) stated that they understood the Google form. The information that has been obtained is then confirmed by means of interviews and observations. The results of the interviews show that most teachers' understanding is still limited to the general description that in inclusive schools, students with special needs can attend school together with students who do not have special needs. This understanding is in line with the objectives of inclusive education, which are to provide equal rights for all children and provide opportunities for children with special needs so that they are not marginalized [18]. However, based on interviews, teachers do not know the types of technical implementation, categorization, criteria, requirements, or differentiated curriculum that apply to the implementation of inclusive education. Some teachers stated that in the implementation of inclusive education, there must still be an expert or accompanying teacher. According to the teachers, the implementation of inclusive education is very good because it provides opportunities for children with special needs to learn together with students who do not have special needs. This is considered good for the socialization abilities of both children with special needs and those without special needs. Observations showed that the implementation of learning in some classes did show the enthusiasm and responsibility of teachers for serving all students.

Based on the results of the distribution of Google Forms at the point of teacher understanding related to children with special needs, many teachers (85.3%) understand the meaning of children with special needs. These results are also adjusted for the results of interviews with teachers. Based on the results of the interviews, most teachers already have some initial knowledge about children with special needs, their types, classifications, and characteristics in general. However, teachers do not have the knowledge and ability to analyze the characteristics of children with special needs in the classroom. Many teachers are also still confused about distinguishing between several types of children with special needs. For example, teachers still find it difficult to distinguish children who

are lazy learners from slow learners. Another example is that teachers find it difficult to differentiate between naughty, active, and tunalaras, or autistic children, and so on. In this case, the teachers stated that their ability to identify and distinguish children with special needs is very limited. Therefore, teachers always consider students to be the same. According to the teachers, it is very difficult to differentiate and provide special education services in a structured manner. It is true that when there are children who are slow learners or show significant differences from other students, teachers will still provide special services. However, this is not considered a reference for the implementation of inclusive education in the school. From the results of observations, in classroom learning, teachers can indeed handle students with various characteristics. But there were also some cases where the teacher did complain about not being able to teach one of the students because, until he was 14 years old, his academic ability had hardly improved. Finally, based on confirmation with the principal, in that case, the student was finally returned to the parents in grade 5.

According to the teachers, there are several types of children with special needs that can be identified by teachers, including the blind, hearing impaired, physically disabled, and those with Down syndrome. In this type, the teacher stated that he was able to recognize and distinguish it from children without special needs. However, for other types of children with special needs, teachers only know their names but are unable to identify them. Types of children with special needs that cannot be identified include children with disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism, ADHD, and so on.

This is closely related to teachers' readiness to accept children with special needs in their class. The results of the entries on this Google Form are almost evenly split between those who are ready (47.3%) and those who are not ready (52.7%) to accept children with special needs as students in their class. However, when confirmed by interview, both teachers who stated that they were ready and not ready had their own reasons and considerations. In all the teachers who stated that they were ready, the biggest reason was the call of the soul, where the teacher stated that all children are equal and deserve the same rights in education. Another reason is that if students with special needs learn in a school environment with students who do not have special needs, it can improve their socialization skills and self-confidence. However, they realize that there will also be many things to consider and many things that must be prepared. One of them is that teachers must be ready to provide more time and be more intense.

All teachers who stated that they were not ready had various reasons and considerations. Of these various considerations, the biggest reason is that the teachers feel that they have not been able to provide maximum

educational services. This is in line with the results of Agustin's research [19] Teachers stated that the lack of teacher competence in dealing with children with special needs is one of the biggest problems in implementing inclusive education. The teachers stated that there are no experts or assistant teachers at school who can help if they have to teach children with special needs in the classroom. In addition, teachers do not have the skills to manage learning with children with special needs. From a social perspective, teachers are concerned that children with special needs will be bullied at school. This is very basic because there are many cases of children with special needs who are victims of bullying at school [20]. In addition, teachers who have taught and are still teaching children with special needs state that teaching children with special needs is difficult. Teachers do not receive any training or other knowledge about educating children with special needs.

Apart from the personal readiness of teachers, based on the observations made, all the schools that were the subjects of the observation did not yet have facilities and infrastructure that support the implementation of inclusive education. These facilities include school buildings that do not have special pathways for people with visual impairments or physical disabilities. There is no special room that can be used for counseling, therapy, or other special handling. Learning resources for children with disabilities are not available; the curriculum is the curriculum for children without special needs, so learning resources are only provided for children without special needs. This is important to prepare for when schools want to implement inclusive education [21]. Apart from the readiness of teachers, the readiness of facilities, education personnel, and an adapted curriculum must also be prepared so that inclusive education can run well [22], [23].

Teachers' readiness to implement inclusive education is strongly influenced by their competencies [24]–[27]. Most teachers are unprepared because there is no training related to the implementation of learning in inclusive schools. Most teachers do not understand how to identify children with special needs and how to provide services for students with special needs in schools together with students without special needs. All the teachers who were respondents had never received training related to inclusive education or children with special needs. The teachers who stated that they had attended training when confirmed were not trained on inclusive education or education for children with special needs. This training is important to improve teachers' readiness to provide education services in inclusive schools.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The results of the study concluded that although most teachers already have general knowledge about the

implementation of inclusive education, primary school teachers in Merauke district are not sufficiently prepared to implement inclusive education in their schools. This is due to several factors, including the lack of competence of teachers in dealing with children with special needs, the lack of teacher competence in identifying various types of children's needs according to their specific characteristics, the lack of accompanying teachers, the unavailability of adequate facilities in schools to be able to provide qualified services for several types of children with special needs, and teachers' concerns that children with special needs can be bullied at school. Teachers' understanding of children with special needs is limited to general types or classifications of children with special needs. Teachers have not been able to identify and provide education services for children with special needs in a systematic and organized manner. The lack of training received by teachers causes them to feel unprepared if they have to provide education services in inclusive schools. The reasons why teachers are ready to provide services for children with special needs based on the inclusive education system are all based on a calling to realize the equal rights of all children. This happened in several schools where teachers were assigned to provide education services for children with special needs in their classes because there were no more special schools (SLB) in the area.

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