



# Enhancing Teacher Competence for Effective Inclusive Education in Indonesia

Yoga Tri Hermawan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Banten, Indonesia

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## Abstract

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Inclusive education serves as a crucial strategy to guarantee every child's right to learn without discrimination, including children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*). Although national policies strongly support its development, implementation in practice continues to face numerous challenges. The low competence of teachers in managing adaptive learning, insufficient professional training, inadequate school facilities, and limited community awareness remain major barriers to achieving inclusive education. This study aims to identify the main inhibiting factors and formulate strategies to improve the quality and effectiveness of inclusive education implementation in Indonesia through a comprehensive literature review of recent research. The findings reveal that enhancing teacher competence, strengthening educational policy support, and providing sufficient learning resources are essential to ensure successful implementation. Furthermore, effective cross-sector collaboration, continuous teacher training, and the transformation of educational paradigms toward more adaptive and socially equitable systems are required to promote inclusivity. Inclusive education must therefore be viewed not only as a policy objective but also as a shared societal commitment to provide equal learning opportunities for all children regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.



## 1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a tangible realization of the Indonesian government's commitment to supporting the achievement of Education for All. Through this policy, every child, including children with special needs, is guaranteed the same right to obtain equitable education services in an inclusive environment without discrimination. The concept of inclusive education focuses on the principles of diversity, equality, and active participation of all students in the learning process. However, the implementation of this policy in the field still faces various challenges, especially those related to teacher competence and the readiness of schools to provide facilities that are friendly and supportive of the needs of all children (Salim, 2019).

Teachers have a central role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. They not only act as instructors but also as facilitators who are able to adjust learning approaches in accordance with the diverse needs and characteristics of students. In this context, teacher competence is a highly crucial factor. Research shows that the limited pedagogical and professional abilities of teachers in teaching children with special needs directly affect the effectiveness of learning and social acceptance in the classroom environment. Teachers who do not understand the characteristics of tend to experience difficulties in creating a learning atmosphere that is conducive and supportive of student diversity (Ediyanto et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, various efforts to enhance teacher competence continue to be carried out through training and certification programs. Fildzah (2020) found that there is a quite significant gap between the standard competence of special education

teachers in Indonesia and other countries, particularly in terms of understanding adaptive learning strategies and individual approaches for students. Therefore, continuous, contextual training programs that align with field needs are required so that the capacity of teachers in applying the principles of inclusive education can increase optimally. In addition to the competence of educational staff, another obstacle faced in the implementation of inclusive education is the limited school infrastructure and facilities. Many regular schools do not yet have learning aids, visual media, or assistive technology that support the learning needs of children with certain barriers. This condition is aggravated by the minimal support from regional policies and budget allocations that are more focused on general education programs compared to strengthening inclusive services (Salim, 2019).

Social factors also pose a major challenge in the implementation of inclusive education. Stigma against children with special needs is still quite strong in some communities. Many teachers and parents assume that children with special needs should pursue education in Special Schools (*Sekolah Luar Biasa*/SLB). In fact, the inclusive approach emphasizes the importance of social integration so that all students can grow and develop together in an environment that respects differences. Ediyanto et al. (2021) assert that teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusive education can be enhanced through effective training experiences and the support of a school community open to diversity.

Studies conducted by Salim (2019) and Fildzah (2020) indicate the necessity of synergy between increasing teacher capacity, strengthening policies, and providing adequate educational resources to ensure the sustainability of inclusive education.

Without comprehensive support from the government, educational institutions, and the community, the inclusive education policy has the potential to become merely normative discourse without meaningful implementation (Byrne, 2022). Thus, the success of inclusive education in Indonesia requires not only structural reform but also cultural transformation within the education system. A paradigm shift is needed that positions diversity as a strength in the educational process. Improving teacher competence, providing supporting facilities, and eliminating social stigma against children with special needs are strategic steps to realize an education system that is truly inclusive, equitable, and guarantees every child's right to learn and develop according to their potential.

## **2. Methods**

This study uses the literature review method to examine and analyze various research findings related to the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia, particularly concerning teacher competence in handling children with special needs. The literature review approach was chosen because it allows researchers to identify patterns, gaps, and recommended policy directions based on empirical findings from various previous studies. Through this method, the research is focused on theoretical synthesis and conceptual analysis of efforts to strengthen teacher capacity and the factors influencing the success of inclusive education implementation.

The data used databased from Google Scholar or Elsevier in this study were obtained from various relevant scientific publications, including indexed national and international journal articles, research reports, and policy documents published

by government agencies. The primary sources consist of research highlighting aspects of teacher competence, professional training, and the attitudes of educators towards the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Furthermore, supporting data were also taken from publications by educational institutions and government agencies focusing on inclusive education implementation policies in Indonesia.

The data analysis process was carried out through three main stages. The first stage, data collection was performed by searching for literature that met the inclusion criteria, namely scientific publications discussing the topics of inclusive education, teacher competence, and children with special needs in Indonesia within the last five years. The second stage, an evaluation of the quality of sources was conducted by considering the credibility of the journals, the clarity of the methodology, and the relevance of the findings to the research focus. The third stage, thematic analysis was carried out to identify the main themes emerging from the literature review results, such as challenges in implementation, strategies for enhancing teacher competence, and relevant educational policy support.

Through this approach, this study aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of the actual condition of inclusive education implementation in Indonesia, especially in the context of teacher readiness in facing student diversity in the classroom. This analysis is expected to contribute both academically and practically to the development of educational policies that are more adaptive and responsive to the needs of children with special needs.

In addition, this literature review method allows researchers to review best practices from various studies that have been conducted, as well as identify policy and implementation gaps that still need to be addressed. The results of this study are also expected to provide strategic recommendations for strengthening the implementation of inclusive education through capacity building for teachers, the provision of continuous training, and the integration of inclusive values in the national curriculum. Thus, this study not only contributes to the development of educational science but also supports the efforts of the government and educational institutions in realizing an inclusive and equitable education system that guarantees equal learning opportunities for all children without discrimination.

### **3. Results**

The results of this literature review indicate that the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia still faces various fundamental challenges closely related to teacher competence, the availability of infrastructure and facilities, and suboptimal policy support. Although the government has initiated a national policy to realize an inclusive education system since the launch of the Education for All program, implementation at the regular school level still shows a wide gap between policy idealism and the reality of educational practice in the field.

The main findings from the analysis of various literature affirm that teacher competence is the primary determining factor in the success of inclusive education implementation. Research by Istiarsyah et al. (2019) reveals that most teachers in regular schools have not received adequate formal training regarding adaptive

learning strategies and teaching techniques for children with special needs. Teachers without a special education background often experience difficulties in adjusting teaching methods, managing student behavior, and providing emotional support appropriate to the needs. The lack of continuous training makes teachers feel less confident and unprepared to face the complexity of the heterogeneous learning situation in the classroom (Gustiani, 2019).

The research conducted by Fildzah (2020) also confirms a significant gap between the standard competence of teachers in Indonesia and several other countries, such as Jepang, Korea Selatan, and Australia. In those countries, teachers are equipped with special certification and training modules focusing on individual learning strategies and diverse classroom management. Conversely, in Indonesia, this type of training is still limited and not yet systematically integrated into teacher professional development programs. Consequently, many teachers still apply a homogeneous approach that is less adaptive to differences in students' abilities, characteristics, and learning styles.

Besides the factor of teacher competence, the limited educational infrastructure and facilities are a significant structural constraint. Many regular schools do not yet have facilities that are friendly to children with special needs. Research by Ediyanto et al. (2021) found that most schools in Indonesia still lack learning aids such as visual media, assistive technology, and flexible learning spaces that can be adapted to the individual needs of students. The unavailability of these facilities impacts the low active participation of children with special needs in the learning process and reduces their motivation to learn. In such conditions, teachers

often have to improvise using limited resources without adequate technical support from regional governments or related institutions.

Social and cultural factors also greatly influence the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. The negative stigma of the community toward children with special needs remains a primary challenge in the effort to apply the principle of inclusiveness in schools (Andriana & Evans, 2020). It is not uncommon to find the view of parents of regular students who reject the presence of children with special needs in the same class because it is considered to potentially lower the quality of learning or disrupt the comfort of other children. This type of discriminatory attitude also affects the perception of teachers and principals regarding the importance of implementing inclusive education. Junaidi et al. (2020) note that teachers working in environments with high social support for diversity show a more positive attitude and greater motivation in applying adaptive learning strategies. Conversely, teachers in schools facing high social resistance tend to maintain traditional approaches and pay less attention to the principle of inclusiveness in teaching.

From the policy side, Istiarsyah et al. (2019) explains that the implementation of inclusive education is not fully supported by clear operational guidelines at the regional level. Many schools do not have internal regulations or technical instructions related to the mechanism for admitting children with special needs students, curriculum adaptation, and learning outcome evaluation procedures appropriate to individual needs. The lack of coordination among education offices, schools, and teacher training institutions also causes the implementation of inclusive education policy to be non-uniform across regions. In a number of cases, schools



that take the initiative to implement the inclusive system actually face administrative obstacles due to the lack of policy support or budget allocation from the regional government.

Besides inconsistent policies, the curriculum issue is also a serious challenge. The uniform national curriculum often does not provide flexibility for teachers to adjust learning according to students' abilities and needs. Teachers are required to achieve the same academic targets for all students without considering the differences in cognitive, emotional, and social abilities of children with special needs students. Consequently, children with special needs are often left behind and do not obtain optimal learning opportunities. Tias and Tongjean (2022) suggests the need for the development of a more adaptive and flexible curriculum model, which allows adjustments based on students' individual abilities, interests, and needs. This type of differentiated curriculum is believed to increase the engagement of children with special needs students while strengthening their social integration in the school environment.

The results of the literature review also emphasize the importance of teacher training in improving the quality of inclusive learning. Training programs focusing on understanding the concept of diversity, differentiation strategies, and student behavior management techniques have proven effective in building the capacity of teachers to create a friendly and inclusive learning environment. Junaidi (2020) show that teachers who have participated in professional training have a higher level of confidence and readiness in teaching children with special needs compared to teachers who have never received similar training. Therefore, enhancing teacher

competence through field practice-based training, case simulations, and continuous mentoring is a very important strategy to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia.

In addition to strengthening the capacity of individual teachers, collaboration between regular teachers and special accompanying teachers (*Guru Pembimbing Khusus*/GPK) is also an important aspect that determines the effectiveness of inclusive learning. However, Tias and Tongjean (2022) notes that the cooperation mechanism between these two parties is still not running optimally. Many schools do not yet have a system of clear division of roles between classroom teachers and special accompanying teachers. In practice, the responsibility for the education of children with special needs is often only borne by the accompanying teacher without the active involvement of the regular teacher. This condition contradicts the inclusive principle that emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibility. Therefore, strengthening coordination and clear division of roles between regular teachers and special accompanying teachers is needed so that the learning process is more integrative and effective (Fitri, 2022).

Cross-sectoral policy support is also an important factor in the success of inclusive education. Salim (2019) highlights that central government policies are often not followed by adequate funding support at the regional level. Budget limitations make it difficult for schools to provide the facilities, training, and human resources needed to develop sustainable inclusive programs. Therefore, stronger coordination is needed among ministries, regional governments, and educational

institutions so that policies do not just stop at the administrative level, but are truly implemented effectively in the field.

In the global context, the practice of inclusive education in Indonesia still lags behind countries that have implemented a comprehensive diversity-based education system (Anwar, 2021). Countries like Australia and Finlandia, for example, have integrated inclusive training into the pre-service teacher education curriculum. In Indonesia, a similar approach is still in the initial stages and does not yet have a standard national benchmark. Thus, higher education policy reform is a strategic step to ensure that the principle of inclusiveness is incorporated into the curriculum of prospective teachers from the beginning of their education.

Based on the overall review results, it can be concluded that the success of inclusive education implementation in Indonesia is highly influenced by the synergy between teacher competence, support for infrastructure and facilities, and the sustainability of adaptive policies. Teachers who have adequate training and a positive attitude towards diversity are the most determining factors in creating a friendly learning environment for all students. Furthermore, strengthening collaboration among stakeholders including the government, schools, communities, and parents is an important prerequisite for creating inclusive education that is socially just and sustainable. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia requires a comprehensive approach that not only emphasizes structural policy reform but also educational culture transformation that positions diversity as the main strength in human resource development.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia still faces various complex challenges, especially in the aspects of teacher competence, limited facilities, and suboptimal policy support. The low ability of teachers to manage adaptive learning for children with special needs is the main factor hindering the effectiveness of inclusive education. On the other hand, the lack of continuous training, infrastructure and facilities that are not yet inclusive-friendly, and the persistent strong social stigma against children with special worsen the gap between policy and practice in the field.

To realize effective and equitable inclusive education, strategic efforts are needed through the systematic enhancement of teacher competence, the provision of practice-based training, and the strengthening of collaboration between regular teachers and special accompanying teachers. The government also needs to reinforce operational policies and budget allocation that support the implementation of inclusive education across all levels. Furthermore, a social paradigm shift that values diversity needs to be continuously fostered so that schools truly become spaces open to all students without discrimination. Thus, inclusive education in Indonesia can run sustainably and provide equal learning opportunities for every child, in line with the principle of “Education for All”

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