



## EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' S PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** *The study aimed to determine early childhood teachers' views and their preparation for implementing inclusive education in the city of Salatiga. This research method uses descriptive qualitative and field research. Data were obtained through interviews and questionnaires from early childhood teachers in Salatiga City. The collected data is followed up with data reduction, data display and conclusion. The results show that not all early childhood teachers understand that Salatiga has declared itself an inclusive city since 2012. The research data shows that some early childhood teachers understand inclusive education. Still, they are not ready to accept children with special needs because they feel incapable of providing services and facilities, have special teachers for children with special needs and still need an inclusive curriculum. Hence, they fear it will worsen the child's situation. The preparations needed by early childhood teachers to implement PAUD-inclusive schools are preparing facilities and infrastructure for learning for both children with special needs and typical children, preparing mature programs through mature inclusion curricula, preparing special teachers such as psychologists/exceptional therapists and equipping teachers and parents in receiving and handling children with special needs through training activities. The success of inclusive education, apart from the readiness of educational institutions, is to change the public's understanding of children with special needs, children with special needs have the same rights as typical children, so it is necessary to build cooperation with parents and the community to learn together to build inclusive schools.*

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**Keywords:** Early childhood teachers, inclusive education, early childhood

## A. Introduction

RI Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the education system article 11 paragraph 1 states that the government and local governments are obliged to provide services and facilities and ensure the implementation of quality education for every citizen without discrimination (Nasional, 2003). Recognition of the existence of education without discrimination between one child and another shows that every child, both children who develop according to their development (standard) and children with special needs, are entitled to the same education and services from the government and the community. Inclusive education was created to fulfill the rights of citizens in obtaining equal rights to educators, including educational services that can include children with special needs in the same school environment as other normal children in regular classes.

Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students Who Have Abnormalities and Have Potential for Special Intelligence and/or Talent states that what is meant by inclusive education is an education system that provides opportunities for all students who have disabilities and have disabilities, potential intelligence and/or unique talent to participate in education or learning in an educational environment together with students in general. Every student with physical, emotional, mental, and social disorders or the potential for intelligence and/or unique talents can participate in inclusive education in specific educational units according to his needs and abilities. The students referred to in this Permendiknas consist of Blind, deaf, speech impaired, mentally retarded, physically handicapped, mentally retarded, learning difficulties, slow learners, autism, motor disorders, victims of drug abuse, illegal drugs, and other addictive substances, have other disorders, and double disability.

In Indonesia, inclusive education is an educational service system that includes children with special needs studying with other normal children in regular schools so that children with special needs are not separated from their environment (Illahi, 2003). The implementation of inclusive education provides opportunities for children with special needs to be able to learn and socialize together with other normal children. Providing

equal opportunities to children with special needs (ABK) in obtaining education and teaching means eliminating the educational gap between normal children and children with special needs so that the rights of children with special needs in obtaining an education are the same.

Inclusive education means that schools and communities must provide all children's needs according to their physical, social, emotional, and other conditions (Budiyanto et al., 2010). Thus, in implementing inclusive education, children with special needs side by side with other normal children in one study group.

The Indonesian government has established a policy for implementing inclusive schools, and several inclusive schools have been established at the elementary, junior high, into high school levels. Implementation of inclusive education based on PP number 17 of 2010 (Pemerintah, 2010) which explains that:

1. SD/MI or other equivalent forms are required to provide access for students with disabilities
2. SMP/MTs or other equivalent forms are required to provide access for students with disabilities
3. SMA, MA, SMK, MAK, or other equivalent forms are required to provide access for students with disabilities and provide academic, social, and/or mental adjustment assistance needed by students with disabilities and students who transfer from other formal education units or other educational pathways.

In implementing inclusive schools, good preparation is needed so that the implementation runs ideally. In addition to preparation, support from various parties also determines the success of implementing inclusive education, including the support of parents, schools, experts, universities, consulting media and the wider community to contribute to optimizing the implementation of inclusive education (Sunaryo, 2009).

According to Kustawan and Hermawan (2013) inclusive education serves to ensure that all students with special needs have equal opportunities and access to obtain educational services that are in accordance with their needs and of good quality in various paths, types, and levels of education as well as creating a conducive educational environment for students, with special needs to develop their potential optimally.

The practice of implementing inclusive education has been started for a long time. However, many people still understand that implementing inclusive education, especially for children this age, is still considered problematic. Many think that so far, the government has provided special education for children with special needs, namely Special Schools (SLB), so that children with special needs are more appropriate to study at the school because children will get the right facilities and services according to the needs of each child.

One of the successes of implementing inclusive education is the qualified educators in fostering and embracing children with special needs. A teacher not only has knowledge but also needs to understand the needs and characteristics of children. This is in line with the opinion of Muhammad Takdir Illahi that a teacher who teaches should have the required qualities, namely having knowledge, skills, and attitudes about the material to be taught and understanding the characteristics of students (Illahi, 2003). The professional attitude of the teacher will be seen in the expertise in delivering the material and also the appropriate learning methods. Teachers are an essential factor in implementing inclusive education in schools, so teachers must understand children with special needs and understand how to act in providing assistance to children with special needs so that they can provide appropriate learning for children with special needs.

People's understanding and perception regarding children with special needs have long been awakened in them that children with special needs who are different from normal children in general learn and have different services and get an education and socialize with children who share the same fate them. Such a perception must be changed because every child has the right to get good education services regardless of the economic conditions or abnormalities that the child has. Such an understanding is not only for the general public, but educational institutions are still not all willing to accept the presence of children with special needs for various reasons.

Salatiga City is one of the cities/districts that declared itself as the City of Inclusive Education on December 12, 2012, and is strengthened by the policy through Mayor Regulation no. 11 of 2013 concerning implementing Inclusive Education. Then take

an active role in taking that role through the implementation of Inclusive Education with the aim that students with special needs get broad opportunities to get an education that suits their needs and abilities. This regulation means that educational institutions in the Salatiga area, including PAUD, must be committed to accepting children with special needs to study with regular students to be guided and nurtured without distinguishing one child from another.

Education for early childhood in Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) is described as education for children aged 0-8 years. In Indonesia, early childhood is for children who are in the age range of 0-6 years. This is explained in the National Education System Law number 20 of 2003. Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a service that provides care, guidance and education to children aged 0-6 years on an ongoing basis. Comprehensive covering aspects of religious, moral, language, cognitive, physical-motor, social, emotional and artistic development (Mendikbud, 2014).

A good understanding of inclusive education will help the success of the inclusive education program, which has become a policy of the Salatiga city government, so teachers must know how to behave towards the implementation of inclusive education. On the other hand, teachers' lack of understanding regarding inclusive education will hinder the implementation of government programs in the success of inclusive education in Salatiga. For this reason, researchers are interested in examining the extent to which the views and preparations of early childhood teachers in the city of Salatiga are related to the implementation of inclusive education in early childhood. It is hoped that through this research, it will be known how the views and readiness of early childhood teachers to implement inclusive education programs so that children with special needs get an education without discrimination.

## **B. Method**

This research is field research; the data for compiling this research is obtained from the field. At the same time, the nature of this research is descriptive-qualitative, which systematically describes the facts found in the field verbally, in the form of sentences, and phenomena and not in the form of numbers. As stated by Moleong

(2011), qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of words from observed behaviour.

This research will discover early childhood teachers' views and the preparations made in the inclusive school program. The instrument used by researchers in obtaining research data is questionnaires and interview guidelines related to the specified problem, namely the views of early childhood teachers and preparations for implementing inclusive education programs.

The research was conducted at PAUD Salatiga, consisting of RA (Raudhatul Athfal), general kindergarten and Islamic kindergarten in several areas of Salatiga city. The subjects in this study were the principal and teachers of TK and RA. Several 50 people were taken by random sampling. The data were analyzed through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions. Then the validity of the data is carried out using the source triangulation technique, which is to compare and check the reliability of the information by comparing data that stays with other data, namely comparing the results of interviews with the results of questionnaires.

### **C. Result and Discussion**

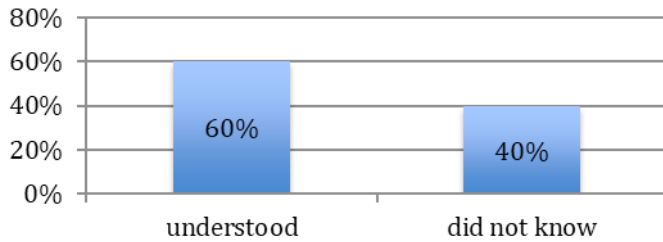
Indonesia took part in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agreement, which was agreed upon with the United Nations in 2015. From this agreement, the president issued Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017 concerning the implementation of the Achieving Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is to provide quality, inclusive and equitable education to support lifelong learning opportunities for all communities (Nuraeni et al., 2018).

Inclusive education is an education system that places all children in one environment or community, both normal children in general and children with special needs, with the hope that children with special needs are not separated from society in general. Inclusive education implementation requires schools to adjust the curriculum, facilities, and learning system (PSLB, 2004). Every child has the same rights in socializing, education and other. Social interaction is essential for children in stimulating children's thinking processes. Children learn from experiences in their environment (Suyadi, 2010).

Inclusive education is a transformation of education to eliminate obstacles that prevent children from being part of education, both obstacles in terms of ethnicity, gender, social status, poverty and so on (Latif, 2013). Inclusive education is a new thing, which in its implementation, requires support from various parties, both government, institutions and also the community. Inclusive education is expected to be a spirit in building a tolerant society in diversity (Santoso, 2010).

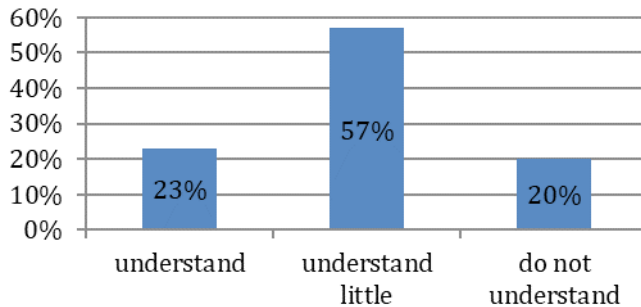
Public understanding of inclusive education has not been well developed. The perception is that children with special needs are different and should get special education and socialize with friends who are in the same boat. Such perceptions implement inclusive education in early childhood less than optimal and experience obstacles (Tim Penyusun PPPAUD-DIKMAS JATENG, 2016). So far, children who have different abilities from other children are provided with special education tailored to their type of disability, which is called Special Schools (SLB). The SLB education system builds exclusivism for children with special needs. This hinders the process of mutual interaction between children with special needs and children in general. As a result, the community is unfamiliar with the lives of children with special needs. In contrast, children with special needs feel that their existence is not integral to the surrounding community (Latif, 2013).

The understanding of inclusive education among PAUD teachers in Salatiga can be seen in the results of the questionnaire that the researchers distributed to PAUD Salatiga teachers. In as many as 50 questionnaires from 50 PAUD teachers who knew Salatiga was an inclusive city, 60% of teachers understood, while the remaining 40% were teachers who did not know. That Salatiga is a city of inclusion. Lack of understanding about Salatiga as an inclusive city because teachers have not received information related to this and have never received socialization related to the implementation of inclusive schools for PAUD, so many teachers do not know about inclusive schools in Salatiga. The following is a diagram of the understanding of PAUD teachers related to the city of Salatiga as an inclusive city:



**Diagram 1.** PAUD teachers’ understanding of Salatiga, an Inclusive City

The understanding of PAUD Salatiga teachers about the concept of implementing inclusive education learning from 50 PAUD teachers who researched, a total of 23% of PAUD teachers understand the concept of inclusive education learning, 57% of PAUD teachers understand little about the idea of inclusive education, and 20% of PAUD teachers do not understand, as follows the diagram:



**Diagram 2.** PAUD teachers’ understanding of the concept of inclusive learning

Of the 23% of PAUD teachers who already understand the concept of inclusive learning, not all are ready to accept children with special needs for several reasons. First, based on interviews with several PAUD teachers, information was obtained on the reasons for not being ready to accept children with special needs, including the feeling that they did not have enough knowledge to provide services to children with special needs. It was feared that it would worsen the situation of children with special needs



children, did not have special teachers who handled children with special needs did not have adequate facilities. To provide good services to children with special needs, and do not yet understand the appropriate curriculum for inclusive schools.

Some Salatiga PAUD teachers know the concept of implementing inclusive education. Still, they feel inadequate and unprepared because most of the teachers who teach PAUD are not from early childhood education or even special education, so teachers find it difficult to educate children with special needs so that in getting to know children with special needs to be deepened about the types of ABK, handling them through training programs and others so that they can provide good services for ABK.

The Salatiga PAUD teachers' view of the implementation of inclusive schools is excellent. They understand that inclusive schools help children with special needs socialize with other communities so that there is no discrimination in education. The implementation of inclusive schools for children with special needs must create a friendly learning environment so that all children can learn comfortably and have fun. Some Salatiga PAUD teachers think that inclusive schools must be implemented but appropriately managed, with adequate infrastructure, good programs and support from all parties, including the family, community and government. The lack of preparation in managing inclusive schools is feared to worsen the condition of children with special needs.

The preparations made by PAUD Salatiga in implementing inclusive schools are by providing special educators, facilities and infrastructure, mature learning programs, special psychologists/therapists, and equipping teachers in dealing with children with special needs by including training. The main thing in implementing inclusive education apart from educational institutions' readiness is to change the public's understanding of children with special needs, namely, children with special needs have the same rights as normal children. Hence, it is necessary to build cooperation with parents and the community to learn together to build inclusive schools. Implementing inclusive school programs will impact several parties involved, such as principals, teachers, special teachers, and parents of children with special needs and regular children, regular students and

children with special needs (Darma & Rusyidi, 2015).

Good support from school principals will have a positive impact on teachers in implementing inclusive education, according to Chazan Center and Wards quoted by Amanda Triwulandari and Weny Savitry Sembiring Pandia (2015) that the supportive role of school principals towards teachers can have a positive effect on teachers in implementing inclusive education, such as providing examples, directions, advice and making good relations with teachers.

Efforts to introduce and implement inclusive education in Indonesia started long ago. Inclusive education is getting stronger with the support of central and local government regulations (Efendi, 2018). Salatiga is one of the inclusive cities, so with the policy from the government, schools in this area must carry out government policy without exception. Some PAUD in the Salatiga area have accepted children with special needs children to study together with other normal children because all children have the same rights in education but do not yet have mature readiness, so the services provided are not optimal, the services provided are only limited to providing assistance and support. More supervision for children with special needs because they do not have special teachers providing services to children with special needs.

The interviews showed that children with special needs were involved in every play activity with other normal children. Learning assignments were limited to training children's independence and fostering self-confidence in children. In addition to not having special teachers, facilities and infrastructure that are not adequate to accept children with special needs are an obstacle in implementing inclusive education, thus limiting the acceptance of children with special needs with different needs. There is no particular curriculum for inclusion in inclusive PAUD learning, so class management is the same as a regular class.

Inclusive education for PAUD schools that have accepted children with special needs to be evaluated in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, class teachers and accompanying teachers with the aim that the implementation of learning for PAUD that accepts children with special needs can be maximized so that they can provide appropriate services to children with special needs.

PAUD dares to accept children with special needs in their

regular classes, even though they are still lacking in services and infrastructure, which is one of the steps of courage for PAUD to provide other educational institutions to participate in the success of inclusive education programs with the hope that children have unique characteristics that are different from other children. The community can receive it well so that they do not feel alienated. They are an essential part of the change and development of the country. For PAUD who have not dared to accept children with special needs because they are worried that they will further worsen the situation of children because they are not ready in terms of infrastructure, special teachers and also the curriculum should take firm steps from the government to provide various training and knowledge about inclusive schools by providing education and training more often for children with special needs. PAUD teachers, which include inclusive curriculum, inclusive learning facilities and facilities, what preparations are made in implementing inclusive schools and others to help teachers be more prepared to accept children with special needs in their educational institutions and be able to implement inclusive school programs.

Teacher competency development is very important to organize optimal inclusive education. The main components in developing the competency of inclusive education teachers are:

1. Have standardized core competencies to become teachers which include pedagogic, personality, social and professional competencies
2. Have special competence in inclusive education for PAUD, namely having understanding and ability in terms of: characteristics and learning needs of children, assessment of learning for children with special needs, creating a friendly learning environment, individual learning programs and evaluation of learning for children with special needs (Heldanita, 2016).

Teachers have a significant role in achieving the quality of learning, for that teachers must be able to prepare teaching materials and varied teaching methods and be able to motivate children so that teachers can instill good character in children as a provision for children in society (Yestiani & Zahwa, 2020). A teacher in an inclusive school must have more abilities, be more patient, and be more diligent in educating, accompanying, guiding

and evaluating every child's development so that children are served well (Firmansyah & Widuri, 2014).

The implementation of inclusive schools to run optimally can be done through collaboration with other PAUD educational institutions located in areas outside the City of Salatiga that have implemented inclusive schools to obtain important information related to inclusive schools. Collaborating with psychologists or therapists to assist inclusive schools is also a good step in implementing inclusive schools.

The implementation of inclusive education requires special handling that is not the same as regular schools, PAUD that is willing to accept children with special needs must have the availability of infrastructure, competent teachers and parental support from all students, both regular class students and parents of ABK students to understand each other's diversity existing (Lestarinigrum, 2017). Adequate facilities from a physical point of view are the main aspects. Still, they need to be accompanied by the form of cooperation and assistance from professionals because the assistance of professional staff will help handle children according to their needs to ease the burden on teachers.

To become an inclusive education unit, according to the Directorate of SLB Development, there are several criteria that must be met in order to organize inclusive education, namely:

- 1) school readiness, both principals, teachers, school committees, students and parents;
- 2) there are students with special needs in the school environment;
- 3) there are special education teachers with special/special education backgrounds or have received special/special education training;
- 4) commitment to completing compulsory education;
- 5) have cooperation with relevant institutions;
- 6) have supporting facilities that are easily accessible to all children;
- 7) have received socialization about inclusive education;
- 8) fulfill the prescribed administrative procedures (SLB, 2007).

Managing inclusive PAUD must be ready to provide excellent services that are effective, efficient, accountable and transparent to the community. This is important because normal children and children with special needs both experience golden times and they

have the same right to obtain education. The earlier the child with special needs gets treatment, the lower the risk of the child being delayed. The implementation of inclusive education must be based on several principles, including: social justice and human rights, normalization, age appropriateness, not limiting the environment (least restrictive environment) (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2014).

Inclusive education views that the differences of each child are not a problem, but rather an opportunity to enrich learning for all children. Inclusive education implements the right of every child not to be discriminated against. Inclusive education makes children a center of learning to be able to accept the differences in characteristics and backgrounds of each child to live together so that it becomes the first step in supporting the government's program of tolerant, peaceful and democratic living (Rahim & Taryatman, 2021).

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the research described above, it can be concluded that all teachers have not yet understood PAUD teachers' understanding of Salatiga as an inclusive city; some teachers have understood the importance of inclusive education, one of which is to provide equal opportunities to all children in socializing and teach all children about diversity so that affection, respect, and respect arises. However, this good understanding has not been matched by action. They are still unable to accept children with special needs in their educational institutions because they are worried that they cannot provide services to children with special needs. Another reason is the limited ability of the education staff, limited learning facilities, and limited understanding of the curriculum tailored to each child's needs. This reason makes PAUD teachers in Salatiga city worry that they will worsen the condition of children with special needs.

The preparations made by Salatiga City PAUD teachers in implementing inclusive education are the preparation of competent educational staff to ensure that readiness teachers must be more familiar with and able to handle children with special needs through professional development. In addition to preparing educational staff, another preparation is the provision of facilities for children with special needs. Another preparation is

to increase cooperation with various institutions, especially those who are competent in the field of special needs services, such as psychologists and therapists, to be able to help provide educational services so that the implementation of inclusive education can run well and children get maximum service.

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