

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND LOCAL WISDOM: CREATING A FRIENDLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract

Inclusive education is one of the strategic efforts in providing equal access for children with special needs to thrive in an educational environment. The link between inclusive education and local intelligence can bridge the gap between meeting special education needs and exploiting local potential. The study aims to identify and analyse how inclusive education based on local wisdom can create an enabling and supportive learning environment for the growth and development of students with special needs. Through literary research methods, this research collects and analyzes data from various scientific publications, research reports, and related educational documents. Research findings show that integrating inclusive education with local wisdom can raise community awareness, increase curriculum relevance, and strengthen social support for children with special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive education, local wisdom, learning environment, children with special needs.

Introduction

Education is one of the most important pillars in the development of individuals and societies. (Sitopu et al., 2024). As a continuous learning process, education is not just about academic knowledge, but also involves the development of skills, values, and attitudes that shape an individual's character. It makes education a key instrument in building a strong foundation for the future of the younger generation and in facing the dynamic challenges of the 21st century. (Guna et al., 2024).

Access to quality education is a fundamental human right that must be fulfilled so that all individuals have equal opportunities to realize their potential and improve the quality of life. (Hairiyanto et al., 2024; Iswadi et al., 2022). The global perspective demands an educational curriculum that focuses not only on the level of knowledge, but also on the

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formation of critical thinking, creativity, and adaptation to social and technological change. (Tubagus et al., 2023).

Education in Indonesia has undergone many changes and improvements over time, but still faces challenges such as the quality of teachers, the disparity of access to education across territories, and the relevance of educational materials to the needs of the times. (Aslan & Shiong, 2023). The national education policy is continuously reformed with the aim of improving the accessibility, quality and equality of education for all segments of society. (Nurdiana et al., 2023).

Research in education, such as innovative approaches to teaching, the integration of technology in the classroom, as well as the implementation of inclusive education, is becoming crucial to ensuring that education systems can respond to rapid global dynamics and provide knowledge capital and relevant skills for students not only to succeed in the future, but also to be responsible citizens and contribute to national and global development. Formulating effective approaches and strategies in addressing educational issues is one of the main steps that should be given priority. It requires collaboration between governments, educational institutions, communities, and the general public in creating an inclusive, sustainable and responsive educational ecosystem to global change (Khakimov, S., & Choriyeve, V. 2023). (Khakimov, S., & Choriyeve, V. 2023). Inclusive education is needed to create a learning environment that accepts and appreciates differences, as well as providing the support that each student needs in order to thrive to the maximum (Pérez Valles, C., & Reeves Huapaya, E. 2023).

Inclusive education is an important entity in the context of modern education that affirms the importance of providing access to education for all without exception. The primary objective of inclusive education is to remove barriers to participation and success in education, especially for those who are vulnerable to exclusion or discrimination, such as students with special needs, ethnic minority backgrounds, or from remote and less developed areas. (Ioannidi, V., & Malafantis, K. D. 2023).

Over the past few decades, global awareness of the importance of inclusive education has increased, and this is reflected in various international legal and policy instruments such as the 1994 Salamanca Declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that set the goal of inclusive and quality education for all by 2030 (SDS Point 4). (Dignath et al., 2022).

Inclusive education not only represents a commitment to education equality, but also forms the foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society. It's about appreciating diversity in the classroom as a wealth that can strengthen learning and teaching. Inclusive education aims to change the education system and school policies to adapt to the needs of different pupils, not the other way around. (Donath et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, the concept of inclusive education has begun to gain more attention in recent years, with policies leading to more inclusive education. (Amjad et al., 2023). However, challenges remain in implementation aspects, including resource availability,

teacher training, political commitment, as well as changing attitudes and public awareness. A common problem in the implementation of inclusive education is the lack of understanding and preparedness from all sides, from educators, parents, to society. Moreover, the learning methods and approaches used are often not sufficient to support student diversity (Kohout-Diaz, M. 2023; Lindner et al., 2023).

The local cultural component (local wisdom) has the potential to be a solution to this problem. Local wisdom encompasses a wide range of knowledge, values, beliefs, and norms inherited from generation to generation in a community (Mulyana, D. 2024). The use of local wisdom in education is expected to create a learning environment more accommodating the diversity of students, including students with special needs. (Baderiah, B., & Munawir, A. 2024).

As a step forward, increased research and discussions on best practices, as well as active collaboration among stakeholders, are essential to support the effectiveness of inclusive education. Sustainable research is needed to understand in depth how the future job market, educational technology, and social dynamics will affect the way we design and deliver inclusive learning experiences.

Inclusive education is not a simple or rapidly completed project; it is a long journey towards systemic change that requires continued dedication, innovation, and commitment from all sectors of society. (Rofiah, N. H. 2023).

So, the study aims to explore how inclusive education and local wisdom can be integrated to create a more friendly learning environment for children with special needs. Inclusive education and local wisdom are complementary, both collaborating in enriching the learning process and shaping a holistic and meaningful approach to education. Their relationships are intertwined through various aspects, making education more relevant, responsive, and embracing all learners with diverse backgrounds.

Recognition and respect for local wisdom in inclusive education not only enriches the learning environment but also helps ensure that education is meaningful and reaches all students, regardless of condition or background. Therefore, combining both requires creative thinking, inclusive planning, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. (Rasidi, M. A. 2023). Through this research, it is expected to be able to provide recommendations based on local wisdom to various parties in an effort to make education in Indonesia more inclusive.

Research Method

The method of research carried out in this research is literature. Literature research method is a series of activities that focus on the collection of data from various text sources related to a subject being studied. (Tharenou et al., 2007; Basrowi, 2008). The main focus of this method is finding, reading, recording, and managing research material. There are several techniques commonly used in literature studies, among others: 1) Keyword search: relevant keywords in catalogues, indexes, search engines can help obtain information

relevant to research. 2) Analytical descriptive: includes the collection, identification, sequencing, and analysis of data found. (Zed, 2004; Sugiyono, 2010).

This method of literature study is also known as literature research or literature review. This technique is very useful in academic and scientific research.

Result and Discussion

Inclusive Education Concept

Inclusive education is a system of educational services that provides an opportunity for all students with disabilities and having the potential of intelligence or special talents to pursue education or learning in the same classroom environment without discrimination (Dignath et al., 2022). Another definition states that inclusive education is an educational system for children with certain limitations and other children gathered in a similar environment, regardless of their respective limitations (Rasidi, M. A. 2023). On the other hand, the definition of inclusive education refers to each student obtaining services according to their particular needs, wherever they are, with an open, non-discriminatory and child-centred education system that accommodates all children in a same class. In a broader context, inclusive education encompasses education at home, community, non-formal, and informal systems. (Rofiah, N. H. 2023).

Inclusive education is based on basic principles that guide practice and implementation in the education system. Some of the main principles of inclusive education include: 1) Acceptance and Respect for Diversity: Recognizing and respecting individual differences, both in terms of abilities, intelligence, socio-economic, cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Every child is accepted and appreciated for its uniqueness. 2) Equal Opportunities: Guaranteeing the right of every child to have equal access to quality education, without discrimination of any kind. All children have the same opportunity to learn, grow, and develop. 3) Full participation: Encourage the involvement of all students in all aspects of school life, including learning-teaching, extracurricular, and social activities. Support the active participation of children in the classroom and the broader school environment. 4) Response to Individual Needs: Education is tailored to meet the specific needs of each child, with an individual-oriented approach. This may require the use of different teaching methods, materials and strategies. 5) Adequate support and accommodation: Provides additional support or changes in teaching and learning to ensure that every child has access to curriculum and full participation. 6) Collaboration: Cooperation between teachers, parents, supporting professionals, and the wider community in support of the educational needs of each child. 7) School and Community-Based Approach: Seeks to instill an inclusive attitude in schools and surrounding communities, creating a supportive environment. 8) Capacity-building: Developing the capacity of schools and teachers in implementing inclusive education through training, professionalism, and adequate resources (Charitaki et al., 2022; Yada et al., 2022; Lindner et al., 2023).

These principles of inclusive education aim to strengthen an educational system that embraces diversity and ensures that every child has an opportunity to learn and develop as optimally as possible.

Children with Special Needs (ABK)

A child with special needs is a child who has a different physical, mental, social, or emotional condition than a child in general. This condition can be congenital or acquired with the development of the child. (Aslan, 2017a).

Children with special needs (SBNs) may display a variety of characteristics, depending on their type and level of special needs. Here are some characteristics that are often associated with different types of specific needs: 1) Learning difficulties such as difficulty understanding and remembering the information taught, difficulty reading, writing, and/or counting, and learning processes that are slower than their peers. 2) Communication difficulties such as difficulty expressing thoughts or instructions verbally and difficulty understanding what others say. 3) Behavioral disorders such as showing impulsive behaviour or difficulty in controlling behavior, often acting without considering the consequences and difficulty in following rules or directions. 4) Social difficulty such as Difficulty in interacting or communicating with peers and adults, Sometimes isolated or isolated by friends, Difficulties in understanding social norms or social rules. 6) Sensory needs, such as Difficulty in processing sensory information, like unusual sensitivity to sound, light, or touch and in the case of autism spectrum disorders, may have recurring behavior or unexpected reactions to sensory stimuli. 7) Special intellectual abilities. In this case, some children have a lower than average IQ that affects their general learning ability. On the contrary, there are children with high intellectual or talent that also include ABK because they require a different educational approach to fulfill their potential. (Aslan, 2017; Agapa, B. M. Y. 2024; Khomsah et al., 2024).

This characteristic does not affect a child's ability to learn or develop, but indicates that they may need additional approaches or resources to maximize their potential. Inclusive education and an individual approach are crucial in supporting the success of ABK (Hikmah, B. 2024).

Local wisdom

Local wisdom is defined as the scheme of values or behavior of a local community in its interaction with its environment. It can include ethics, norms, acts, and behavior of the community (Baderiah, B., & Munawir, A. 2024). The forms of local wisdom in a society can be values, standards, ethic, beliefs, customs, customary laws, and special rules. (Lestari, N., & Suyanto, S. 2024).

The presence of local wisdom is crucial because it not only shapes the cultural identity of a community but also contributes to environmental sustainability and well-being. In an era of globalization, it is important to preserve local wisdom as part of a cultural

heritage and as an alternative approach to addressing contemporary issues. (Masrukhin et al., 2023).

There are some examples of local wisdom in Indonesia that demonstrates cultural richness and a way of life that is in harmony with the environment: 1) Subak in Bali is a traditional irrigation system for peanut farming regulated by subak, an organization consisting of farmers owners of fields. This system is rooted in the concept of Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes harmony between man, nature, and God. 2) Sasi is a traditional rule applied by communities in the Maluku and Papua islands to regulate the use of natural resources such as seafood, maintain sustainability and prevent excessive exploitation. 3) Pahomba is a tradition of the Toraja community in South Sulawesi that is a form of respect for the universe and the ancestors. This practice involves customary rituals, planting trees, as well as protecting the environment as an expression of gratitude to the Creator. 4) Awig-awig is a customary law instrument in Bali that regulates various aspects of the life of local communities, including the management of natural resources, land management, and social relations, reflecting local wisdom in social and environmental balance. 5) Gotong royong is the spirit of co-working that is deeply embedded in Indonesian society. This concept can be seen in all aspects of life, from housing, agriculture, to disaster management, demonstrating solidarity and cooperation among community members (Sukirno et al., 2023; Masrukhin et al.

This local wisdom in Indonesia reflects the values that stem from the long interaction between societies with their natural and social environments, giving valuable lessons about sustainability, coexistence, and harmony of life. (Putra & Aslan, 2019).

Local wisdom plays an important role in education in a number of ways: 1) Enhance understanding: local wisdom can help students understand the concepts taught in schools in their local context, thereby enhancing their understanding and acceptance of the material. 2) Appreciate Local Culture: Through teaching local wisdom, students can learn to appreciate and understand local culture and traditions, as well as the values contained therein. 3) Developing Skills: Learning local wisdom can also help students develop skills that are useful in everyday life, such as gardening, grinding, cooking, etc. 4) Building Relationships with the Environment: Integrating local wisdom can help students build better relationships with their natural and social environment, which can ultimately give rise to a better attitude towards the environment. 5) Moral and Ethics lessons: Local wisdom often contains important moral and ethical lessons, which can help shape the character of students. 6) Increased Self-esteem: Local wisdom can help students develop a strong sense of identity and enhance self-respect, by appreciating the uniqueness of their local culture and history (Aura et al., 2023; Sukirno et al., 2023; Masrukhin et al., 2023).

Therefore, education that integrates local wisdom has the potential to be more holistic and relevant to student life, not just a transfer of academic knowledge.

Integrating local wisdom into inclusive education practices

Integration comes from the English word 'to integrate'. Generally speaking, the definition of integration is the process of merging or combining different components into one whole and interrelated unity. (Putra & Aslan, 2019).

Examples of integration practices in education in inclusive schools: 1) Inclusive curriculum: Curriculum designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or background, can access and succeed in education. 2) Inclusive learning: A learning strategy designed to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs, by providing adaptation and modification as needed. 3) Participation in Extra-curricular Activities: All students, regardless of their abilities, are given equal opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, and other clubs. 4) Support From Professionals: Students who need additional support may have specialists working with them, such as speech therapists, occupational therapist, or psychologists. 5) Inclusive physical environment: Classroom settings and other school facilities are designed to accommodate the needs of all students, including those with physical disabilities. 6) Teacher and staff training: Teachers and staff are trained to support and educate students with different levels of ability and needs. 7) Parental involvement: Parents and families of students are included in the learning process and are given the opportunity to participate in school activities (Lindner et al., 2023; Rofiah, N. H. 2023; Rasidi, M. A. 2023).

The goal of this integration is to encourage all students to learn and thrive together in an environment that supports and appreciates their differences and potential.

Integration into the learning environment of children with special needs (SBS) can have a significant positive impact, including: 1) Social acceptance: Educational integration promotes interaction between SBS and other students, which can enhance social awareness, understanding, and acceptance of differences among students. 2) Academic development: Children with specific needs are often more motivated and have a higher chance of developing in an inclusive learning environment, as they can take an example from their classmates and get additional help when needed. 3) Social Skill Development: ABK has plenty of opportunities to build social and communication skills by interacting with peers in various school situations. 4) Care and Empathy: An inclusive environment increases the awareness and empathy of other students about the human diversity and challenges faced by ABK, develops an attitude of care and assistance without compulsion. 5) Increased Individual Needs: Inclusive education demands a more individualized approach to teaching, which can benefit all students, not just ABKs, because it recognizes and meets different learning needs. 7) Preparation for Real Life: Integration helps ABK to be more prepared to switch to adult life with the variety of complex social interactions they encounter in the wider environment outside of school. 8) Stigma Reduction: Providing an inclusive environment reduces the stigma and negative stereotypes that often accompany ABK because exposure to diversity improves understanding and reduces fear of "the unknown" (Hidayat et al., 2023; Latifah, I. 2020; Maftuhatin, L. 2014).

By integrating ABK into a broader learning environment, schools not only help those children, but also build a stronger, more empathic, and more diverse school community.

Challenges in Creating a Friendly Learning Environment for ABK

Internal school barriers refers to barriers that originate within the educational system or institution itself that can impede the learning and development of students. (Tuhuteru et al., 2023; Aslan & Pong, 2023). The following are some examples of common internal barriers found in schools: 1) Health factors: Poor student health conditions can be an obstacle in the learning process because they affect concentration and stamina during the course of education. 2) Teacher involvement: Students may experience learning barriers when teachers do not apply effective teaching methods or are less actively involved in the process of learning. 3) Inappropriate curriculum: Curriculum that is not in line with the needs or level of understanding of students can impede learning effectiveness. 4) Tools and Prasarana: Limitation of school facilities and supplies such as inadequate classrooms, outdated equipment, or lack of teaching material can impede teaching learning process. 5) School environment: less conducive school environments, such as noise, poor hygiene, or uncomfortable atmosphere, can interfere with student concentration as well as motivation in learning (Astuti et al., 2023; Aziz, A. N.2023; Tobasa, R. M., Nurah, W.20- 24).

External barriers are external factors that can negatively affect social change and growth. A number of external obstacles that a society may encounter include natural environmental changes and warfare (Khaerunisa, H. 2023). Other external impediments can include natural disasters, which force people to relocate and adapt to new ways of life and social systems. Besides, a revolution or revolt in society can also be an external obstacle if it produces new forces in society. (Azizah, A. N. 2023).

Threats from outside, like security disturbances, can also be external barriers to society. It can affect social integration in societies if people feel insecure and choose to disobey the social order in their region. (Harefa et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Inclusive education and local wisdom play an important role in creating a friendly learning environment for children with special needs. These two aspects, when well integrated, can enrich a child's learning experience and build a more inclusive and tolerant community.

Conclusions that can be drawn from the interaction between inclusive education and local wisdom in creating a learning environment that supports children with special needs: 1) Appreciate the uniqueness of each individual: inclusive education focuses on preparing learning environments that accept differences as part of the collective wealth. Local wisdom, with values empowered, reinforces the understanding that every individual, including those with special needs, has uniqueness and potential to develop. 2) Building Community Awareness: Local wisdom often encompasses strong community values, where

respect, acceptance, and support for members of the community are part of everyday life. An inclusive education that applies these values helps shape awareness of the importance of social support and encourages students to help their friends with special needs. 3) Adapting Learning Methods: By integrating local wisdom, inclusive education can enrich learning methods and materials to make them more relevant and attractive to children with special needs. Traditional stories, games, and activities can be adapted to encourage their active participation and facilitate more inclusive learning. 4) Making Schools a Community Centre: Schools can establish closer relationships with the surrounding community by organizing activities that build awareness and understanding of the needs of children with special needs. Through this way, schools are not only a place of learning but also a community center where local wisdom and inclusive education meet. 5) Using Local Resources: Local wisdom provides the resources and strategies that can be exploited by inclusive education, including traditional knowledge and natural resources. It helps in creating a more sustainable and local-context approach to education for children with special needs. Thus, enthusiastic, inclusive education embracing local wisdom not only teaches children with specific needs but also members of the community as a whole. It creates a learning environment that is not only friendly and supportive of special needs but also educates everyone about the importance of diversity, tolerance, and solidarity.

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