

# *Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Elementary School*

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*Abstract—The identification and assessment in inclusive school is one of inclusive school aspects which are important to assist teachers in understanding and recognizing the barriers of special needs students. This study aimed to describe the process of identification and assessment of inclusive elementary school and what is needed to be prepared to do the identification and assessment. This study was a literature study by analyzing 4 survey in 4 regions in Yogyakarta. The review result showed that the identification and assessment process should be carried out by 1) officers who have a deep understanding of children with special needs and equipped with the involvement of experts; 2) an instrument or guide for limiting the things to be observed; and 3) results report (completeness of data) that needs to be synchronized to the learning objectives.*

*Keywords—identification and assessment, students with special needs, inclusive elementary schools*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Schools are the formal facilities where children get their right to learn. In the school structure, there is a standard system in providing learning to children. [1] stated that elementary school is an educational unit that organizes education for six (6) years. In addition to regular elementary schools, Indonesia also uses other educational system which are inclusive schools and special schools. Stainback and Stainback in [2] explain that inclusive schools accommodate all students in the same class. That is clear that children with special needs are also in the same class as the other children.

Inclusive educational system pay attention to the rights of every child in learning, including children who experience special needs. [3] emphasize that inclusive education does not distinguish the children' background related to mental retardation or in terms of physical limitations. The statement can be interpreted that children in any condition have right to obtain the same education according to his potential and abilities.

Based on data that taken in 2017, Yogyakarta City Education Service noted that there were 29 Elementary Schools which were considered capable in implementing inclusive education [4]. Meanwhile, data from other regions which was recorded by the Sleman district Education, Youth and Sports Service stated that there were 32 primary schools administering

inclusive education in [5]. Data in the Kulon Progo district reached 26 inclusive schools [6] and data in Bantul district showed that 45 schools were considered capable to implementing Inclusion [7]. These data indicate that the government has given attention to education for children with special needs.

In the implementation of inclusive schools, a clear system is needed to support both students and educators to carry out optimal learning. [8] states that there are several principles in organizing inclusive schools that can be referred to: new student admission (PPDB), identification, curriculum adaptation (flexible curriculum), designing learning materials and child friendly learning activities, child friendly classroom arrangements, assessment, procurement and use of adaptive learning media, and evaluation of learning.

According to [9] in his research revealed that although many schools declared themselves as inclusive schools, there were still many which is not in accordance with the concept. Even the survey conducted in 2017 also showed that although the government was assumed that certain schools were able to hold inclusive education, but the schools themselves felt unable and had not used the concept of inclusiveness in learning program. There are many factors that need to be prepared in carrying out inclusive education.

The important thing to be concerned about is how to identify and assess the children with special needs. Identification is a process to find and recognize students with special needs to be able to be given services that are in accordance with the particular needs. While assessment is carried out to ensure the level of disability or the level of special needs experienced by students. The identification can be done by the teacher, however the assessment needs to involve experts or professionals to provide certain judgments. Teachers need to identify students to be assessed by experts.

Identification and assessment in the setting of inclusive education, especially in elementary schools, have not been widely discussed. There were several articles which discussed about appropriate methods or strategies to assist children with special needs in class. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to describe the identification and assessment process for children with special needs in the inclusive schools.

### A. Children with Special Needs

[10] Indonesian government stated in Indonesian Act No. 6 on 2016 that people with disability are people who have obstacles in physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory which affect their life to involved in the society. [11] also explain that children with special needs are children with special characteristics which are different from those children in general in a serious and settled manner. It can be assumed that children with special needs are children who experience obstacles in their development or experience acceleration in their development therefore they need special assistance.

### B. Identification and Assesment

Identification of children with special needs is a process to identify children with special needs, in this case children who have disabilities with accompanying symptoms [12]. Lerner in [8] stated that identification is carried out for five purposes: screening, referral, classification, instructional planning, and monitoring pupil progress. The purpose of carrying out identification is to gather information or related data to abnormalities or deviations in the growth/development that children have compared to other children in general. The results of the identification can be used to prepare the learning programs which suitable to their specific needs and/or to organize programs and interventions/treatments/therapies related to the obstacles [8]. The identification process is important to do since it is one of the determinants for the teacher in preparing learning programs which are appropriate to the needs of the child.

The assessment explained by [13] is structured activities for a specific purpose. The activities carried out in the assessment are collecting data and information that will be used for consideration and decisions related to learning. The assessment activities in inclusive schools consist of screening, diagnosis, program placement, curriculum placement, teaching evaluation and program evaluation. Diagnosis is one of the assessment processes which should involve experts such as psychologists for optimal assessment.

### C. Inclusive School

Inclusive education is an educational service provided to every child without exception [11]. To conduct an inclusive school, it is needed to implement inclusive principles: new student admission (PPDB), identification, adaptation of curriculum (flexible curriculum), designing learning materials and activities of child friendly learning, child friendly classroom arrangement, assessment, procurement and use of adaptive learning media, and evaluation of learning [8]. Stainback and Stainback [3] suggest that inclusive schools should accommodate all students in the same class. In the Salamanca statement, regular schools with inclusive orientation were an effective way to avoid discriminatory attitudes, create an open society, build an inclusive community and achieve effective education for the majority of children, and increase efficiency thereby reducing costs associated with the entire education system. [11] stated that inclusive schools can be a place for every child to be accepted as part of the class, accommodate and respond to diversity through a curriculum

that suits to the needs of each child and collaborate with the community.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was using a literature study by analyzing 4 survey in 4 regions in Yogyakarta (Sleman, Yogyakarta City, Bantul, and Kulon Progo). The survey which was reviewed were the research of [5], [6], [4], and [7]. The four studies explored 8 principles of inclusive schools according to [8] new student admissions (PPDB), identification, flexible curriculum, designing teaching materials and child-friendly learning activities, child-friendly classroom arrangement, assessment, procurement and utilization adaptive learning media, as well as evaluation of learning.

The four studies used the same instrument in the form of a questionnaire with 100 open questions. The focus of study was the principles of identification and assessment which are needed as the basis of knowing the classification and characteristics of children with special needs, as well as appropriate assistance. The identification principle was explored by 4 questions and the assessment were explored by 27 questions. The list of the questions can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2. Theory was used in this research to review the surveys by using secondary sources model. The research analysis was using content analysis.

TABLE I. Questionnaire questions of identification

Indicators	Questions
Identifying children with special needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do teachers identify children' obstacles?</li> <li>2. How do teachers in this school conducting identification process based on the emerge symptoms on every child?</li> <li>3. How do teachers organize the identification results of children with special needs?</li> <li>4. Do the school and the teachers aware concerning to the identification purpose? Then how do school and teachers respond the identification process?</li> </ol>

TABLE II. Questionnaire questions of assessment

Indicators	Questions
Effort in collecting information to monitor learning progress.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do collect the information which was done by school to monitor the progress and make decisions which is needed?</li> <li>2. How do teachers contribute in assessment process for decision making concerning to children with special needs?</li> <li>3. What instrument do teachers used concerning to decision making for children with special needs? Why do teachers using those instruments?</li> <li>4. How do teachers use the instruments to identify children' disability?</li> <li>5. What role do teachers do in conducting assessment to children with special needs?</li> </ol>
Conduct the screening.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do screening test conducted for children with special needs?</li> <li>2. Why did the screening test conducted in the school?</li> <li>3. How did the screening test conducted in the school?</li> <li>4. How many screening tests do the school conduct in one school year?</li> </ol>

		5. Do the screening test accompanied by professionals?
Conduct the diagnosis regarding to the appropriateness of special educational services.	1.	How do the diagnosis process conducted in the school?
	2.	Why do the school need to conduct the diagnosis test to know the children with special needs?
	3.	How do the follow-up conducted after the diagnosis?
	4.	How do the school deliver the diagnosis result to the parents?
Conduct the placement program for children with special needs.	1.	Do the school conducting program placement?
	2.	How did the program placement conducted for children with special needs?
	3.	How do professionals help the school in program placement?
Conduct the curriculum placement to start the instructional program.	1.	Are there any difference on curriculum placement between children with special needs and other children?
	2.	How do the curriculum placement used for children with special needs?
Conduct the instructional evaluation for children with special needs.	1.	How did the learning evaluation conducted for children with special needs?
	2.	How do teachers follow-up the evaluation result?
	3.	Do teachers ever change the learning procedure which was planned for the children?
	4.	If it was done, how did teachers change the learning procedure?
Conduct the program evaluation for children with special needs.	1.	Do program evaluation conducted in the school?
	2.	How do program evaluation conducted for children with special needs?
	3.	Do teachers set targets for program evaluation?
	4.	How do the targets set for the program evaluation?

### III. DISCUSSION

#### A. Identification

Identification is an important process to find obstacles which experienced by children and to arrange a proper services concerning to their needs. Identification of children with special needs should conduct to identify children with special needs characteristics and their accompanying symptoms (comorbidity). In the survey, [7] found that the identification process in inclusive school in Bantul district was carried out by interviewing student' guardians, and observing the teaching and learning process. This is in line with the results of Cahayani 2017 research in Kulonprogo district which focuses on observing children's behavior and direct interviews with children.

To get the right identification results, it requires a guide or instrument that is appropriate to observe and interview the child or guardian of the child. The survey result conducted by [5], inclusive schools in Sleman district conducted identification based on guidelines prepared by experts or psychologists. While in the Yogyakarta city, [4] found that the involvement of the City Education Office helped the schools to do appropriate identification for physically, cognitive, and mental development. This shows that the involvement of experts or professionals who have depth knowledge regarding to children with special needs is necessary. The availability of qualified resources can help the school and teachers in classifying the children with special needs, especially to find children with low error rates.

Identification needs to be carried out by the teacher continuously and if necessary involves experts such as psychologists to optimize the obtained results. Completeness of background data and condition of the child can help the teacher to identify the child's needs in learning. After getting complete data, the teacher needs to make a report and discuss with relevant parties such as the principal and experts to determine the next action. This is done to minimize perceptions that might be different to reach an agreement. The results of the identification can be continued with an assessment where the overall results are used as the basis for the preparation of learning programs according to their abilities and disabilities (Ghozali in [14]).

#### B. Assessment

Teachers need to contribute to the identification process to identify the children with special needs. Most of these contributions involve the assessment process for students [15]. In addition, before compiling a learning program, assessment should be done first to collect data and information about children [14]. Assessment is defined as a process of gathering information to monitor progress and make educational decisions which is needed Overton in [15]. In general, teachers could contribute to the assessment process which includes screening, diagnosis, program placement, curriculum placement, teaching evaluation, and program evaluation. In addition, experts are needed to be able to provide guidance and diagnoses that are appropriate to the child's condition. The survey result which was done by [7] showed that the assessment conducted in Bantul district involved experts from the Special School (Sekolah Luar Biasa) to provide the right diagnosis. A similar process also was found in in Kulonprogo district by Cahayani 2017 and in Sleman district by [5]. Where in both districts involved psychologists.

In the assessment, there is also an assessment term for progress monitoring. This term of assessment is a brief assessment given during the school year to inform the teacher concerning to the progress of the child therefore teacher can provide the needed assistance (Bursuck & Damer in [15]). This assessment is proper if also done by the teacher so as the assessment provides optimal results for the development of the child. The process of monitoring progress includes the steps of setting target goals for students, selecting assessment to indicate the progress by using higher or lower level of difficulty, conducting regular assessments, and identifying the adjustment growth (Jenkins in [15]). To carry out this assessment, teachers need an understanding of the behaviors and characteristics of children with special needs. Teachers need to have specific and standardized instrument for observation to record important things of children' development in the classroom.

Assessment should carried out continuously including academic and non-academic assessments [14]. Academic assessment includes counting skills as well as other academic abilities so as the learning objectives should be prepared which are suit to the children's abilities. While, non-academic assessment is an assessment of child' development include psychological, emotional and social development. [13] explained that assessment is a whole and holistic activity for a

particular purpose, the activities carried out in the assessment are collecting data and information that will be used for consideration and decisions related to learning. Therefore after identification, the assessment process will help teachers to find out more about the abilities and potential of the children have [14]. The survey results showed that the conducted assessment carried out during learning so as it can be added notes for the child's evaluation. However, it is still unclear how the assessment of progress monitoring has been carried out in inclusive schools.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Identification and assessment will obtain children' data, include those with special needs and those without special needs so as based on the obtained data can be determined the proper services which are suit to the needs of children. The identification and assessment process require a measurement instrument. Therefore, teachers should develop a measurement instrument as a guide in observing child's behavior, but the involvement of experts are also needed in determining the standards of measurement instrument. Based on the survey results, it appears that the implementation of identification is necessary to pay attention to the following matters : 1) the need of officers or teachers who have knowledge of the classification and characteristics of children with special needs; 2) complete data of children starting from family background and test results that might have been done; 3) initial instruments or guidelines that can be carried out by the teacher; 4) analyze data and classify children; 5) conduct consultation meetings with other teachers and principals such as case conferences; and 6) compile a report. After compiling the report, it is needed a continuous assessment until teachers could find an appropriate learning method. In the assessment, it is necessary to pay attention to 1) the team that has an understanding of the condition of children with special needs; 2) determine goals and objectives; 3) determine aspects of learning; 4) instruments; and 5) plan further monitoring. From the aspects that need to be considered, in general it can be determined that during the process of identification and assessment that there are things should be concerned about: 1) human resources who have a deep understanding of children

with special needs equipped with the involvement of experts; 2) an instrument or guide for limiting the things to be observed; and 3) report (completeness of data) that needs to be synchronized to the learning objectives. Those are expected to be done to help children so as they get a proper educational services which suitable to their potential, ability, and needs.

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