

# CREATING INCLUSIVE CULTURE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY IN KARANGMOJO SUB- DISTRICT GUNUNGKIDUL REGENCY

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**Creating Inclusive Culture of Elementary Schools: A Case Study in Karangmojo Sub-district, Gunungkidul Regency**

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## CREATING INCLUSIVE CULTURE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY IN KARANGMOJO SUB-DISTRICT GUNUNGKIDUL REGENCY

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### Abstract

Karangmojo Sub-District, Gunungkidul Regency is one of the minus areas in various aspects of life with the highest number of persons with disabilities in the special region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In this area, the forerunner of inclusive education in Indonesia was born. The purpose of this study was to reveal: A) attitudes of teachers toward students with special needs as a reflection of the school's inclusive culture, B) role of principals in creating school inclusive culture, and C) school, parent, and community partnership in promoting inclusive culture. Data collection techniques were interviews, observation, and documentation. The findings showed that in general the regular teacher showed a positive attitude to the students with special needs in the social interaction, but negative attitude could appear during classroom teaching practices involving the presence of students with special needs. In general, the support and ability of school principals in embracing all parties in the implementation of inclusive education in schools helped to support creating inclusive culture in schools. School, parents, and community partnership also supported creating an inclusive culture in schools, but were often constrained by the social and economic conditions of the surrounding community.

**Keywords:** Elementary School, Inclusive Culture, Teacher Attitudes, Principals Role





## A. Introduction

<sup>16</sup> Inclusive education still receives special attention in the world. "Inclusive education is, very simply, a statement of everyone's fundamental right to access education and not be excluded" (Stubbs, 2008: 18). For most educators, this term can be seen as a more positive description in an effort to bring together children who have obstacles in realistic and comprehensive ways in a comprehensive educational life. <sup>31</sup> This wave is not only beneficial for children who have been excluded (children with special needs), but also for all children, parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members (Smith, 2013). In the context of <sup>19</sup> index for Inclusion, inclusion is explored along three interconnected dimension of school improvement: creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive policies, and evolving inclusive practices" (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). "Cultures reflect relationships and <sup>18</sup> deeply held values and beliefs "(Booth & Ainscow, 2016: 17). The successful implementation of inclusive education in a school is closely related to how the school culture is in responding <sup>13</sup> to the differences in it.

The principal is the key to shaping a positive culture in a school (Hudgins, 2012; Habegger, 2008; Macneil, Prater, & Busch, 2009), as well as in the development of an inclusive culture in school (Ainscow, Dyson, <sup>11</sup> Weiner: 2013). The principal roles of headmaster leadership in relation to inclusive schools are: (a) building a shared vision and commitment, (b) developing a professional community that shares responsibility for the learning of all students, redesigning the school, and (c) sharing responsibility for inclusive education (Billingsley, Mcleskey, Crockett, 2014: 25).

Not enough just with strong leadership, the success of education in a school is usually also supported by good cooperation between schools with parents and the surrounding community. "Interaction between learners, parents, teachers, or community members is the core value of school culture empowerment" (Saminan, 2015: 154-155). A strong school, parent, and <sup>6</sup> community partnership is needed to support inclusive programs. "The theme of positive school culture that promotes a sense of



6 belonging among all stakeholders emerged as the overarching, influential factor in facilitating trusting family-professional partnerships between families and school staff" (Francis, Hill, Banning, et al., 2016: 292). "The 9 four school factors that appeared to contribute most to the promotion of strong community partnerships were (a) strong school leadership, (b) inviting school culture, (c) teacher commitment to student success, and (d) collaboration and communication among partners" (Gross, Haines, Hill, et.al, 2015: 23). School partnerships with environmental communities support student learning, improve schools and strengthen parent and environmental relationships (Stefanski, Valli & Jacobson, 2016)

As the latest alternative to special needs children's education, opportunities for conducting studies and research on inclusive education are widely open. 7 Implementation of inclusive education is increasingly prevalent in various parts of the world and its implementation in various countries has a variety of styles and cultures. Indonesia is one of the countries that helped to promote inclusive education in its education system. Since 1997, Indonesia has ratified the 1994 Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education. Furthermore, in 1998 to 2001, Puslitjak, Balitbang, Depdiknas has conducted limited integrated education trial in elementary school since 1999/2000 fiscal year in 7 elementary schools in one of the clusters of elementary school in Karangmojo Sub-district, Gunungkidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta (Subijanto , 2002). The seven primary schools were SDN Karangmojo III, SDN Gedangan II, SDN Gedangan I, SDN Sookoliman II, SDN Karangwetan, SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo, and SDN Pangkah. Budiyanto (2006) said that the integrated education did not provide all the required components, but only limited training and support funds. These trial results were then used by the Directorate of Special School Development as the basis for socialization and implementation practice of Inclusive Education in Indonesia by adopting the basic concept of integrated school and modified by using inclusion approach.

This study is the first study to examine inclusive culture of elementary school in Karangmojo Sub-district, Gunung Kidul Regency by



considering the role of the region as the birthplace of the inclusive education in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to reveal how the attitudes of teachers toward students with special needs as a reflection of the school's inclusive culture, role of principals in creating school inclusive culture, and school, parent, community partnership in promoting inclusive culture.

## B. Method

The approach of this research was qualitative research as case study strategy. Case study was used since it focused to be studied and the research objectives require deep and detailed data. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007: 447), defines case study research as: "(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon ". The research was conducted on seven elementary schools implemented inclusive education in Karangmojo Sub-district, namely SDN Karangmojo III, SDN Gedangan, SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo, SDN Pangkah, SDN Gedangan 1, SDN Karangwetan, and SDN Karangmojo II.

This research used purposive and snowball procedures for informant sampling techniques. The informants in this study include principals, regular teachers, special assistant teachers, parents of the children with special needs, and other stakeholders.

The data collection techniques in this study included observations, interviews, and documentation. To help researchers as a human instrument, it needs the supporting instruments namely observation and interview guidelines. Data analysis in this research was done by using Miles and Huberman model (interactive model) that included reduction, display data, and conclusion drawing/verification.

## C. Research Finding

Based on the results of interviews, observation, and documentation in the field, the research findings are as follows:





### 1. Attitudes of Regular Teachers toward Students with Special Needs

Generally, it is seen the positive attitude of the teachers towards the students with special needs within social interaction of elementary school in Karangmojo Sub-district. The teachers are quite open for the enrollment of students with special needs in school. They have understood that despite their impairments, students with special needs have the right to school. The documentation of schools shows that every year at least schools receive and have students with special needs. This indicates that the leaders and teachers in these schools already have awareness and acceptance of students with special needs at school. The attitude of rejection of students with special needs often comes from regular students. When seen there "exclusion" of students with special needs by their friends, the teachers will give advice or understanding on regular students to be able to empathize over the conditions and barriers faced by his friends. The teachers also often motivate the students with special needs to be not inferior with his friends, because often barriers in social interaction also appear from students with special needs themselves. Most students with special needs feel insecure, refuse to join, or have behavioral and emotional disorders, so this often becomes their obstacle in interacting with their friends. In this case, the teachers play a role in bridging good relationships among students.

One of Teacher (Coordinator of Inclusive Education of SDN Karangmojo III) said:

*"Actually, the teachers understand, but the majority of students are still mocking special needs students, even though we have given them some understanding, there are also some jealous students, and they think we privilege their friends with special needs, while we serve them according to their needs ..."*

This statement was reinforced by one of the mothers of students with special needs from SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo:

*"If I think personally...the teachers appreciate ... But if the other students sometimes can not accept friends like this... just my daughter shy, He is basically quiet, so do not want to join her friends."*





One of the field notes during the observations at SDN Pangkah illustrated how the attitudes of teachers to students with special needs:

... A male teacher who became known as a teacher of sixth grade and a female teacher came to class and asked fifth and sixth grade boys to gather in sixth grade classroom, while the girls students gathered in fifth grade classroom. They would be given an explanation of the Persami camp that will be held. IZ (a student with special needs), suddenly came to male teacher who stood at the door and asked her to joke. Several times he was like doing a boxing gesture to the teacher of fifth grade. The teacher of grade VI was not angry and even laughed. (O/ CL.003 SD VII, 1-8-16, CD.p. 1-3)

Negative attitudes of some teachers will be visible during the learning process, and this is related to the lack of competence and training of teachers in instruction for students with special needs. The majority of regular teachers in the inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district have education background of elementary school teacher or general education. Only a small portion of regular teachers with a special need education background and only exists in SDN Karangmojo III. The documentation of schools shows that 98,4% teachers have general education and elementary school teacher education (*Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar/PGSD*) background, and only 1,6% teachers with special education (PLB) background. Principal of SDN Gedangan explained:

"... PGSD, Elementary School Teacher Education ... for his competence ... just as much as he can. The lessons learned from PGSD may have been inserted at least, and there may also be workshops for teachers maybe... add to the raucous competence of teachers...I remind to each class teacher, also to the parents, I give them understanding if they really want to school his children here,... because the ability of teachers is also limited ..."

Although there have been efforts from schools to increase the competence of regular teachers in terms of Special Education, but this is also not effective. Due to the limited training provided by the government, only certain teachers could follow it. This condition is also exacerbated by the number of regular teachers in Karangmojo (33,3%),



who are still non-permanent teachers (GTT). They are not government employees (PNS) who are paid by the government. The impact, the level of welfare of teachers in Karangmojo sub-district is still low and influences their low performance. In observation, it seems that there are still many teachers are less able to handle and to teach students with special needs in the classroom, especially for students having impairments with high gradations. Occasionally, some of teachers ignore the presence of students with special needs in their class. As seen in observation of SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo, during learning hours in first grade, a student with Downs's syndrome wandered outside the classroom and did not follow the learning in his class. This field note made by researchers' describes the situation:

*... It turns out that the children's who followed by AD (one of student with special needs) praying Dhuha are second graders. Researchers were surprised to see in the classroom of first grade seen that there is learning by teacher. Though AD is a new student in first grade, meaning he out of class and follow the activities of second graders himself...(O/ CL.005.SD.IV, 10-8-16, CD.p.2)*

Some teachers sometimes feel overwhelmed when having to deal with students with special needs with a particular case. If they feel unable to handle special needs students with severe disorders, some schools suggest the students move to SLB (Special School), for example as happened at SDN Karangwetan. And, one of teachers in SDN Karangwetan stated:

*"... Because of differences of the students, it takes patience. ... If later the teachers here are not able to handle, and (the student) handled by GPK is a serious disorder, then we move the child to the SLB ... "*

Generally the process of learning and handling of students with special needs in all-inclusive elementary schools in the Karangmojo Sub-district still dependent on Special assistant Teachers (GPK). However, the arrival of GPK in inclusive elementary schools only 1-2 times a week, as they still have the main task of teaching in the main school (SLB). The number of GPK is only one person for each inclusive school, and there are



even schools that have not received GPK in recent years, such as SDN Gedangan. Of course, this will not be an effective way to handle students with special needs.



*Figure 1. GPK of SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo providing individualized learning to her students with special needs*

Collaboration between regular teachers and GPK is more visible in the classroom during the lesson. When regular teachers teach and focus more on regular students, GPK mentors and guides students with special needs. The majority of schools showed that there was good coordination of duties and communication between regular and GPK, but sometimes there seems to be a lack of good coordination of duties and communication between some of the regular teachers with GPK for example as seen in SDN Karangmojo III.

One of the informants, GPK of SDN Pangkah said:

*"... should be with the GPK if there are difficulties experienced by the child ... if GPK is not obliged to teach in class. So the GPK is only special accompaniment, providing services to students with special needs, giving guidance and consultation to classroom teachers ..."*

While Principal of SDN Gedangan explained:

*"if there ever was a GPK here, it was ineffective, because one week only once came, then ... also did not accompany the students, just come here, come, attend, fill in the absence list, GPK is not likely to reach the class..."*





Figure 2. Collaboration of class teachers and GPK in SDN Karangmojo II

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## 2. The Role of the Principal in Creating School Inclusive Culture

The elementary school principals in Karangmojo Sub-district have high role and support in embracing all parties in the development of inclusive education. Generally, the form of support are conducting socialization of inclusive education to parents and community, organizing assessment for children with special need, and involving teachers in various training. In some schools, such as SDN Karangmojo II, SDN Gedangan, and SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo, the principals have the idea to organize a skill training activity for children with special needs. Even the headmaster of SDN Karangmojo II implements participatory leadership, and was open to all sharing and input from teachers and staff. The duration of the principal's tenure implies a concrete form of support and the principal's program on inclusive education.

Principal of SDN Gedangan I explained:

*"The program is temporarily advancing so that the child is skilled, intelligent, looks skilled, because even though he is here including special needs students, he can follow the regular ones...In fact, when it is judged, it is no longer appropriate for him to include a special needs children ... For subsequent programs, skills upgrading for him, if he can not continue, at least he can go to vocational school ... "*

GPK of SDN Karangwetan also stated:

*"I think the principal supports him Sometimes there are programs from outside such as self-development, brushing teeth, it is very important for children with special needs, especially as Down syndrome who can not take care of themselves.*





Figure 3. Friday morning activity of principal of SDN Pangkah with the teachers and students

### 3. School, Parents, and Communities Partnership

School and parents' partnerships of inclusive elementary school in Karangmojo Sub-district related to the implementation of inclusive education are more on communication and socialization. Majority of students with special needs come from families with social, economic, and educational problems. There are two types of parents, namely cooperative and non-cooperative parents. Each type affects the goal's optimization and student education outcomes. The explanation GPK SDN Gedangan I as follows:

"... Because in terms of family economy also affect. Because many children are there, sometimes his parents in Jakarta, sometimes his parents continue to work the child just raised by his grandmother here, sometimes their parents have divorced, and others. It causes the child to be slow learner".



Figure 4. One of the students with special needs of SDN Gedangan I with her family

School and community partnerships of inclusive elementary school in Karangmojo Sub-district tends to be socialization, communication, and

involvement of community members in the school committee. Inclusive education conducted by school<sup>42</sup> provides solutions for the surrounding communities who have children with special needs to send their children to school. Since the number of special schools (SLB) in the local area is limited in number and is often far away from where they live.

SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo is the only religious-based inclusive elementary school in Karangmojo Sub-district, so this school also often involves members of the surrounding community in religious activities organized by the school. Given these activities, the acceptance and discourse of the surrounding community towards children with special needs and inclusive schools is more open. And this activity, the acceptance and discourse of the surrounding community towards children with special needs and inclusive schools is more open. Schools collaborate with Special School (SLB) in providing GPK and student assessments. Schools also collaborate with other Inclusive Education Schools at different levels in new student admissions and attending several inclusive school forums. In some cases such as SDN Karangmojo II, SDN Gedangan, and SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo, schools also cooperate with universities, for example relationships in the form of assessment and as a research site, to be a real work college and field experience for students. School collaboration with other institutions in various forums and activities helps<sup>36</sup> to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and principals on inclusive education. Principal of SD Muhammadiyah Sumberejo said:

*"Community support is good, .. It's willing to accept children with special needs ... the community also already understand that here is inclusive school ... often during religious activities, such as recitation, usually we involve the citizens, or during idhul adha."*

One of Teachers of SDN Karangmojo II said:

*"...School Forum of Inclusive Education Organizer, SPPI ... once here also there is a research conducted from UGM .... There are students with special needs ... usually we direct the continuation of school, usually in Ekakapti and MTs Junior High School ..."*







Figure 5. A Down syndrome child was enrolled by her mother at SDN Karangwetan

#### D. Discussion

Teachers' attitudes toward special needs students illustrate the inclusive culture of primary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district. The findings in this study also indicated differences in attitudes of teachers towards the presence of students with special needs in schools. Alhassan (2014) finds that In general, teachers were found to hold some positive attitudes toward inclusion, but had little knowledge of inclusive practices. This was evident in the limited use of instructional adaptations to meet individual needs.

Generally, the inclusive elementary school teachers in Karangmojo Sub-district already have a good acceptance attitude in social interaction with the students with special needs, the exclusion attitude of the students with special needs often raised from some of the regular students. Teachers at inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district often advise regular students to be more empathetic to students with special needs. Motivation is also given to students with special needs to be more confident when interacting with his friends. Hongboontri & Keawkhong (2014) stated "to better understand school cultures and the reciprocal relationships between school cultures and teachers' beliefs, behaviors, and instructional practices, teachers' perceptions of their social organizations need to be examined".

The negative attitude of regular teachers in inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district is more apparent at the time of

teaching practice. Due to the lack of competence of regular teachers in terms of Special Education and handling of children with special needs due to teachers' background with general education; it is often a waiver of students with special needs while studying in the classroom. The presence of a characteristic of a student's disability affects the willingness of teachers with a general education background to have their population in the class in general (Cassady, 2011), especially in students who have high impairments. Alhassan (2014) stated that teacher attitudes differ depending on the type of disabled students in school and the severity of disability. Teacher's negative attitudes were associated with large class sizes and the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom.

The neglect of special needs students by regular teachers in classroom learning is more apparent when the GPK is absent. These negative attitudes related to the regular teacher education background, the lack of training they get, as well as their employment status that is closely related to teachers' welfare. There are still some regular teachers who were less able to collaborate well with the GPK (special assistant teacher). This finding is appropriate with Chan and Yuen's (2015) assertion that commitment from individual teachers to implement inclusive practices in various classes was required. Some teachers cannot adapt to their teaching approach and have difficulty performing different learning activities, as well as improvements in working with assistant teachers. While the findings in Tanzania (Hofman and Kilimo, 2014: 177), teachers face many problems in the implementation of inclusive education, particularly in managing diverse students with disabilities, lack of teaching and learning materials, lack of training and poor work environments.

The findings show that generally, principals of inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district supported the implementation of inclusive education, which embraces various parties. The principal is the driving force behind the school culture, which can primarily be achieved by: a) demonstrating effective, effective leadership; b) directly, and actively involved, and c) having expectations (Francis, Hill, Banning et. al, 2016). The key components of the principal's leadership in relation to inclusive schools:



building a commitment and a shared vision, building a professional community that divides responsibilities for learning of all learners, designing schools, and sharing responsibility for inclusive education (Mcleskey & Crockett, 2014: 25). The principal was identified as the key to successful implementation of inclusive education for students with special needs. So that, "Prospective principals require knowledge, skills, and dispositions to equip them to work with key stakeholders to initiate and sustain inclusive practices within their schools" (Lyons, 2016: 36).

The partnership between schools, family and community of inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo sub-district according to Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence model, such as overlapping balls. The ball illustrates that schools, families, and communities each have shares and influence in children's education. The overlap of the ball represents that the interests and influence of the stakeholders in children's education were interdependent. School partnerships with parents refer more to the type of communicating, which according to Epstein and Salinas (2004: 12). The schools have been trying to establish communication with the family about school programs and student development. School and community partnerships play an important role in school success: providing support and resources to meet the needs of staff, families and students (Gross, Haines, Hill, et al, 2015).

The socio-economic conditions of the community in Karangmojo Sub-district also affect the pattern of life and the level of thinking. Majority of parents of elementary schools of Karangmojo were in a weak economic condition, lowly educated, and have social problems. These were of course affects the pattern of parenting in children and sometimes cause the special needs of children. Lebona's study (2013: 119) found that learning barriers to inclusive schools are not always rooted in learners, but factors such as pedagogy, socio-economic conditions such as poverty and the rigid curriculum manifestations in most elementary schools. Akelo (2016) was found that in general elementary schools in Kenya, the economic status and religion of families of student special needs have an effect on the implementation of inclusive education. The level of family education has an influence on inclusive education but is very low.





## E. Conclusion

The attitude of teachers in inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district to students with special needs consists of two categories, namely a positive attitude is the acceptance of teachers in general to the existence of students with special needs in school, and teacher's negative attitude will easily arise during classroom learning practices. The background of teacher education, lack of training, employment and welfare status, and the ability of teacher collaboration with companion teachers will also influence the practice of teaching and handling of teachers to students with special needs in their classes.

Generally, the inclusive elementary school principals in Karangmojo Sub-district have contributed to the creation of an inclusive culture in schools. The school principal's support and ability to embrace all parties will be a main key to sustainability of inclusive education in schools. Principals become the main force in the creation of an inclusive school culture. Ultimately, the effective leadership ability of the principal will be able to involve all available resources.

There has been an effort to forge school partnerships, parents, and communities in inclusive elementary schools in Karangmojo Sub-district. This partnership affects creating inclusive culture in schools, which provides support and resources that can bring together the needs of all staff in schools, students, families and community members. However, often socio-economic problems surrounding communities affect their lifestyles and levels of thinking, as well as affect their support for inclusive education.

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