



## Analysis of the Development of Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Education in Kindergarten

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### ABSTRACT

A child who has special needs (ABK) needs appropriate education from an early age, considering that during this period there is an acceleration in the growth and development process. In line with that, inclusive education is present to answer this problem. Through this inclusive education, a child who has special needs (ABK) is able to learn, interact and play activities with other ordinary children to improve their development. This research aims to find out how the development of ABK when attending an inclusive school. This research answers this problem with a case study using a qualitative approach. Regarding methods, this research utilizes three data collection tools, namely observation and interviews, as well as documentation to answer questions more comprehensively. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that children with special needs can optimize their development in inclusive education which accommodates and facilitates children with special needs with special assistance to participate in learning and playing at school with other regular children. So that Children with Special Needs (ABK) can attend school comfortably and happily in inclusive schools. This is proven by the existence of a regular form of mutual respect between children towards a child who has special needs. So that a child who has special needs feels valued and confident in an inclusive school environment.

### INTRODUCTION

A child is a small individual who has potential and needs to be developed. Through unique characteristics, namely active, enthusiastic, dynamic, and a deep desire to understand everything that is seen, heard, and understood. Like there is no end to exploring and learning from adults that make it look different (Kresnawaty & Heliawati, 2019). In line with that, Rogers et al. (2021) say that “During early childhood, children rely on their existing understanding of the world to make sense of these differences and attribute significance to them”.

“Every child should have access to high-quality early education and care that respects their individuality and sets the stage for a successful future” (Lang et al., 2024). A very important phase in life is at an early age which people usually say is the golden age, because the education given at this stage will be the foundation for a person's life (Hartik et al., 2023). This is because the development of intelligence reaches 50% of the total potential that can be achieved (Hartati, 2017).

At the PBB based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, emphasizing that early age requires special attention. This is related to the development and balance of his personality, a child must be raised in a family environment full of happiness, affection, and understanding (Nurvitasari et al., 2018).

Education is an effort to expand knowledge and develop one's potential through both personal environments such as family and community, as well as structured environments such as educational institutions. Formal education in schools is recognized by everyone as an important activity in development according to the environment. This effort must continue to be made so that someone is not left behind, either in education, work, or in the future. A Kindergarten is one of the strata in a structured education system intended for children aged four to six years whose existence plays a very important role in the development of the child's potential (Parapat et al., 2023).

Effective education allows children to learn easily, enjoyably, and in accordance with the expected goals. To achieve this, teachers have the responsibility to serve all children, especially children with special needs, who may face various obstacles in development, motoric, physical, social, or emotional. (Munarmi & Damri, 2023). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) affirm that a child with special needs has an equal standing with other children. Ensuring access to early intervention and education for children with special needs can fulfill their rights.

“Inclusive education is an approach that integrates students with diverse learning needs into mainstream classrooms, promoting equality and accessibility in the educational environment” (Qizi et al., 2024). Inclusive education invites all children to learn and prepare for full participation as a significant and meaningful policy in adulthood (Baroroh & Rukiyati, 2022). In line with the view Purbasari et al. (2022) by stating that special children have equal rights to receive education in general educational institutions.

Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia through regulations No. 70/2009, Inclusive education provides extensive opportunities for children with special conditions, whether physical, emotional or with unique intellectual abilities and skills, so that they can obtain quality learning according to their existing needs and respective abilities. (Baroroh & Rukiyati, 2022). The importance of implementing inclusive schools in kindergartens is driven by the fact that there are still many children with special needs who do not have access to an education process that is equal to children in general. There are a number of obstacles in implementing the following education, including the limited number of educators who understand the concept of inclusive schools, a curriculum that is applied, implementation of teaching, and facilities and infrastructure that are still limited (Yuniarni et al., 2023).

The implementation of educational standards for a child with special needs is certainly different from normal children, as a response to the needs and stages of student development are not the same. The learning method used should be able to reach the unique intelligence of each child. This is important because each child has a different potential, influenced by genetic

factors or areas in the environment. Then because of this, the teaching process needs to be aligned through the capacity of each individual student (Nurvitasari et al., 2018).

Based on the results related to initial observations and an interview through the head of the RA Amanah school that the special needs child in RA Amanah Sidoarjo is one child who has difficulty interacting and communicating with others (Autism). The child with the initials DV, a 5-year-old male, group A. When the school was first registered based on the results of the principal's observation, the results were that Ananda DV was a child with mild autism. So, the principal is sure that Ananda DV will gradually improve if he goes to school at RA Amanah. This is supported by the statement that by accepting a child with special needs related to children regularly in order to study material in an inclusive class that is open and free from discrimination is a crucial aspect in the implementation of inclusive education (Lazar, 2020).

Autism is a disorder in children who have difficulty communicating, understanding the meaning of a language related to signs, for example marking something or giving a sign, then always repeating the same words or sentences and also occasionally getting angry and then throwing tantrums that are difficult to control (Ishartiwi et al., 2023). The difference between children with special needs such as autism and regular children lies in the weak ability to interact and difficulty concentrating on routine activities in the school area, even so if it is related to the provision of proper handling and guidance, the development of children with special needs will develop well (Christyastari & Rusmawan, 2023).

The right solution for children with special needs is the implementation of inclusive education, when a child with special needs and a regular child are able to interact in a similar environment (Oktaviani et al., 2024). Inclusive education in Kindergarten requires the role of various parties to support the learning of children with special needs. In relation to that, education obtained from inclusive education is an educational institution that pays attention to the individual needs of all children, both regular and special needs, to learn in general education places, so that they can optimize the development of a child for those with special needs (Tanjung et al., 2022).

Based on the results of previous research Pangestuti & Darsinah (2023), it was found that the management of learning from planning, process, to evaluation was good. However, there is no program planning for special assistance for children with special needs, because there is a lack of teachers at the inclusive PAUD school called Saymara in Kartasura, which is the result of a child with special needs who is involved in the learning process does not get guidance or assistance so that it is less than optimal.

While the results of the study according to Kresnawaty & Heliawati (2019) get the result that the teaching process for students in general and a child with special needs (ABK) is made in a uniform class. The assessment is carried out every month in the form of a descriptive study. Then the results of a study from the name Margiyanto (2022) states It is important for education managers to pay attention to activities held for early childhood in the context of inclusive education. Creating a superior generation begins with the provision of inclusive education for each individual that continues to be developed and improved.

Based on the results of initial observations at RA Amanah and based on the results of previous studies above, it is a motivation for researchers to find out how inclusive education at

RA Amanah can provide a safe and comfortable space for children with special needs. So this study intends to analyze how the development of a child with special needs in an inclusive school.

## **METHOD**

The following study uses a method related to qualitative research descriptively. Where the following study has the intention of answering the phenomena that occur by the research subjects through descriptive descriptions that produce more holistic research. Related to the place of the following research, it was carried out at an educational institution called Taman Kanak-Kanak RA Sidoarjo which is located on Jalan Greenville number 9/36, Perumahan Citra Harmoni, Taman, Sidoarjo, Sidoarjo Regency, East Java Province.

The subjects of this study involved 1 child with special needs autism group A who was in one class with a total of 16 regular children so the total in one class was 17 children. In the class there were 2 teachers, namely a homeroom teacher and a teacher who had the status of a companion. Then the following study obtained sources of information from school leaders who had the authority to make decisions at the school level, then a teacher acted as a teaching staff who was related to the teaching process at school.

Interviews, observations, and documentation as supporting evidence in the study. In collecting data with a method of participatory observation, it is carried out using the skills and understanding of researchers in explaining the facts that occur at the location. An instrument related to this research is a sheet in the form of interview notes and observation note sheets. All are carried out systematically with results in accordance with the actual situation. The interview technique is carried out by the question and answer process to the resource person to explore the information needed. Then the documentation as additional data collected by the researcher to complete the research data (Kresnawaty & Heliawati, 2019).

This study requires a technique for collecting data through observation of activities carried out at school. While interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and parents as sources of information. In the final stage of the study, documentation is needed for the entire series of research activities carried out. In this qualitative study, data analysis is used which requires three stages, namely simplifying the information obtained, presenting data information, and the last is verifying the data, where the data obtained is original data from the results of interviews, observations and documentation (Hartati, 2017).

## **RESULTS**

Inclusive education at RA Amanah Sidoarjo carries the concept of education that does not see differences in children so that it is adapted according to the needs of students including for children with special needs (ABK). RA Amanah Sidoarjo has a vision and mission related to creating a generation of the Qur'an that implements the values of the Sunnah in their daily lives. In addition, preparing individuals who are independent, creative, intelligent, and have noble morals and instilling habits in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah from an early age.



**Picture 1.** Interview with the Principal

According to the results of the interview with the school principal Riski Amalia Nurmalitasari, S. Pd. at RA Amanah Sidoarjo in the new student recruitment process is carried out in three stages, namely classically, filling out forms, and initial observation of the child's condition. At the classical stage, prospective children are invited to tour the school to see and feel the facilities and infrastructure that are available. Then if the prospective child feels comfortable and interested in going to school at RA Amanah, the stage of filling out the form to register as a child at TK RA Amanah Sidoarjo is continued. At the last stage, initial observation of the child's physical condition is carried out to see whether the child has a disorder or not.

At RA Amanah, teachers provide learning that prioritizes integrated education and accommodates the child's needs. We do not use a companion teacher for Ananda DV who is competent in this case, a companion teacher who is a graduate of psychology or special education. However, according to the principal, because the level of autism in Ananda DV is mild, the principal feels that the class teacher and companion will be able to accompany the development of Ananda DV until



**Picture 2.** An Interview with a Homeroom Teacher

Referring to information obtained through a direct interview with a Homeroom Teacher, Mrs. Rani, S. Pd. is inclusive education in the learning process at RA Amanah

Sidoarjo, where teachers treat a child with special needs (ABK) and a child without special needs equally without discrimination. All children play and learn together in the classroom without discrimination. They have the same rights but with different needs, because Ananda DV needs special assistance. According to the class teacher referring to the results of the analysis of interviews and observations related to the development of special needs children Ananda DV at RA Amanah Sidoarjo, the following results were obtained:

**Table 1.** Results of observations and interviews

No	Indicator	Statement
1.	Social emotional, cognitive, language, moral and physical development of children with special needs (autism) at RA Amanah	<p>In terms of social emotional development, Ananda DV is starting to be able to follow his other friends in terms of socializing, he is starting to be confident even though sometimes Ananda DV feels uncomfortable and isolated again.</p> <p>Ananda DV's language development is starting to develop little by little because he is often invited to chat by his classmates when they play together.</p> <p>According to the class teacher, for the cognitive development of DV's child, he has started to want to be directed in several activities such as matching pictures of objects with number symbols.</p> <p>The moral development of Ananda DV also began to develop as evidenced by the fact that Ananda DV was willing to shake hands with teachers or parents.</p> <p>The physical motor development of Ananda DV began to develop as evidenced by Ananda DV being able to stack blocks in a balanced manner and also Ananda DV beginning to be able to coordinate his hands and feet when doing gymnastics with his friends.</p>

From the table of results of the analysis of the development of children with special needs (autism) at RA Amanah above, it is proven that DV is treated the same, namely having the same opportunities to learn and play as other children. So that DV is little by little able to follow the development of his other friends who are not the same as him. It can be proven by the results of the analysis above that children with special needs can develop and experience rapid progress when they attend regular schools.



**Picture 3.** DV during learning

From the documentation results, it shows that Ananda DV has begun to be confident in answering questions from the teacher. Ananda DV is also rarely alone anymore now. He has begun to get used to socializing with other friends.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the concept of inclusive education at RA Amanah Sidoarjo, it implies that even though there is only one child with special needs, the school still facilitates the child with one accompanying teacher to learn and play with other friends who are not children with special needs (ABK).

The learning method applied at RA Amanah Sidoarjo is the result of a curriculum developed by Raudhatul Athfal, with various approaches, such as Islamic, Scientific, and Contextual Learning. Learning does not only focus on developing cognitive aspects, but psychomotor and affective. Therefore, various learning strategies implemented at RA include direct learning strategies, individual, and group learning.

The learning approach is more influential than the concept conveyed. As a result, a teacher needs to adjust the teaching approach and method to suit the characteristics of the child, conditions, and situations as well as the needs of the learning process. Based on the approach and model implemented in learning at RA Amanah Sidoarjo, it implies that learning (Islamic, scientific and contextual) can be collaborated to produce varied and innovative learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

Inclusive education is a strategic and innovative approach in reaching education for all children, including children with special needs (ABK). ABK can receive education from an early age to optimize various aspects of their development, through the provision of stimulation in the field of education that supports physical and mental development. This aims to make children more ready to socialize with their environment. An important element for early childhood is play activities, which should be rich in activities that provide freedom for children to explore and be creative.

RA Amanah Sidoarjo, which implements schools with inclusive education, accommodates children with special needs to participate in learning activities while playing in the school environment without differentiating them from other general children. Through the collaboration of three Islamic, Scientific, and Contextual approaches, this school is able to answer the needs of students in improving child development. So that Children with Special Needs are better off with inclusive education than Special Schools if the facilities, both infrastructure and school environment, support and develop a sense of tolerance for all students towards existing differences. So a Special Needs Child who goes to school at RA Amanah Sidoarjo will feel comfortable and happy going to school and will gradually improve little by little.

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