*Rasmitadila et al.*

*Vol. m, No.n, pp. a-b (to be filled by editorial desk)*

*Date of Publication: (to be filled by editorial desk)*

*DOI: (to be filled by editorial desk)*

*This paper can be cited as: (to be filled by editorial desk)*

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**INCLUSIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN INDONESIA**

**Rasmitadila**

*Department of Elementary School Teacher Education, Universitas Djuanda, Bogor, Indonesia, Rasmitadila@unida.ac.id*

**Megan Asri Humaira**

*Department of Elementary School Teacher Education, Universitas Djuanda, Bogor, Indonesia, Megan.asri@unida.ac.id*

**Reza Rachmadtullah**

*Department of Elementary School Teacher Education, Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia*

*rezarachmadtullah@unipasby.ac.id*

**Ayu Anggraini Putri**

*Department of International Relations, Universitas Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia,*

*Ayuanggraini2000@gmail.com*

**Abstract**

*The**involvement of universities in inclusive education in inclusive primary schools is still not maximal, and the real impact can be felt for improving the quality of inclusive primary schools. So far, the problems that occur in inclusive schools have only been resolved by the school, and there is rarely any direct involvement of universities that can contribute as solvers. This study aims to explore the opinion of general teachers (GT) on the expectations of university involvement in inclusive education practices. in Indonesia. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews of forty GTs in two provinces in Indonesia. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The research resulted in three main themes: inclusive school mentoring, majors relevant to inclusive education in universities, and students' understanding in an inclusive classroom. GTs hopes that university involvement in the practice of inclusive education in Indonesia is expected to meet and solve the problems often faced by inclusive primary schools. Universities must meet the needs of primary school teacher graduates who will teach inclusive classes based on the problems faced by GTs so far, including in academic and non-academic aspects. The results of this research are significant for universities to design courses that are relevant and in line with the needs of inclusive primary schools. For this reason, all decision-makers at the university must be able to make and establish rules following the analysis of the needs of inclusive education practices.*

**Keywords**

Inclusive Elementary School, University Engagement, Inclusive Education

**1. Introduction**

Success in implementing inclusive education in inclusive elementary schools must involve all parties, both internal and external parties. The involvement of internal parties such as the principal, teachers, school staff, students, and parents is one unit that must support each other solidly. Meanwhile, external parties such as the community, universities, and relevant experts also play a significant role. Good cooperation between the two parties provides an excellent opportunity to solve all the problems that have occurred in the practice of inclusive education, especially in Indonesia. In particular, universities have a significant role in producing graduates - in education - who are expected to implement inclusive education practices in inclusive elementary schools (Kozibroda et al., 2020). Universities that organize special teacher education study programs or elementary school teacher education courses that hold inclusive education courses are an effort to bridge the needs and fulfillment of problem-solving in inclusive elementary schools. The university is expected to meet the needs of prospective elementary school teachers with problems that occur in elementary schools (Baharuddin & Dalle, 2019). The programs in the subject must be able to be concretely practiced by prospective elementary school teachers. When teaching, they can carry out instruction with the competencies that have been obtained at the university.

But so far, the involvement of universities in inclusive education in inclusive elementary schools has not been maximized, and the real impact can be felt for improving the quality of inclusive elementary schools (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Gross, 2015). The problems that occur in inclusive schools have only been resolved by the school. There is rarely any direct involvement of the university that can contribute as problem solvers. For example, in instruction, inclusive teachers find it difficult to design instruction according to their class characteristics with a variety of students with different abilities. Problems in instruction like this cause teachers not to have the right and effective way of designing instruction because they do not know who to look for answers to or solve them.

Meanwhile, regulations from the government require that all elementary schools accept students with special needs to study together in regular primary schools. This condition causes the accumulation of problems in inclusive practices faced by inclusive teachers. Another problem is that universities have not been able to identify problems in inclusive elementary schools, so there is a gap between the material presented in university classes and the reality in inclusive elementary schools (Jacobs-Bell, 2014). As a result, graduates who teach in inclusive schools have not solved the problems that often occur in inclusive classrooms.

For this reason, universities must be able to identify and analyze problems that often occur in inclusive elementary schools so that they become lecture topics or materials that can contribute to problem-solving for elementary school teacher graduates. Universities must be able to make a good portion of teacher theory and practice to be relevant to the existing instruction conditions in elementary schools (Li, 2020). All problems in implementing inclusive education with the need for inclusive education course materials must be able to become a solution in the real practice of inclusive education in inclusive elementary schools. Inclusive elementary schools give high hopes for the university's involvement as a place to develop inclusive education through the latest research on inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). The research carried out is expected to solve problems and provide solutions for school members in implementing inclusive education. This study aims to explore the opinions of general teacher (GT) expectations regarding university involvement in inclusive education in Indonesia

**2. Research Methods**

**2.1. Research Design**

This research uses a case study approach to obtain and examine data on a particular phenomenon or event. The subject of a case study in an educational context can be people, students, or school staff who are members of the school community (Crowe et al., 2011). The data generated from case studies are used to explain and describe a case that is deep and detailed in life comprehensively real (Yin, 2012).

**2.2. Participants**

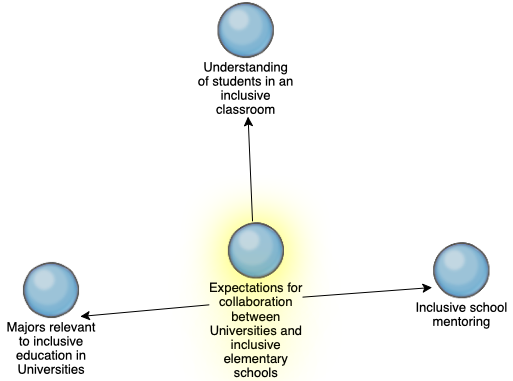
Participants involved in this study were forty inclusive elementary school general teachers (GT) from schools designated as inclusive elementary schools and general elementary schools that accept special needs student (SNS). GTs come from forty inclusive elementary schools from West Java and DKI Jakarta, Indonesia, and have experience teaching inclusive classrooms. All participants have had experience teaching in inclusive classrooms, with teaching time at most with a span of 1-5 years. In addition, the education level of the most widely used is the bachelor level. Meanwhile, types of SNS that the GT taught consist of ADHD, slow learner, deaf, autism, down syndrome, speech impaired, learning difficulties, dyslexia, and dyscalculia.

**2.3. Data Collection**

Data collection was carried out by semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions conducted between the researcher and GT as participants. The researcher created an interview guide that was validated by two experts in the inclusive field and developed questions provided by the participants. Interviews were conducted for about 1-2 hours for each participant. In one day, as many as four respondents were interviewed, so a total of 10 days to carry out the interview. Interviews were conducted online using the Zoom application and by recording the contents of the interview. Then, the researcher transcribed all the interview content according to the contents of the interview (Verbatim). The interview material relates to the involvement of universities in the practice of inclusive education in inclusive elementary schools, including the barriers, roles, and problems faced by inclusive elementary schools during inclusive practice.

**2.4. Data Analysis**

Data analysis used thematic analysis techniques to explore the opinion of the GTs. The data generated from each participant in the form of responses was made in several stages. In the first stage, codes (keywords) representing participant statements are made so that they do not overlap. The second stage is the categorization of the codes that have been made. With the researcher's large amount of data, coding and categorization easier used the Nvivo 12 application. All interview data were entered and given codes and categories. Researchers analyze each categorization to allow for the integration or unification of codes to be more effective. This inductive technique enables the identification of themes expressed by participants in response to research questions (Liu, 2011).



**Figure 1:** *Results of data analysis inclusive elementary school expectations for university engagement*

**3. Results and Discussion**

The results of the data analysis consisted of three main themes: inclusive school mentoring, majors relevant to inclusive education in universities, and understanding of students in an inclusive classroom.

**3.1. Inclusive School Mentoring**

Assistance for schools inclusive according to GT needs to be done by universities. Several important issues in this assistance include human resource development, improved instruction in inclusive classrooms, understanding of inclusive education. Human resource development in inclusive schools must be able to involve all school members. Because the successful practice of inclusive education only can be successful if all school members support inclusive practice (Moriña, 2017). In the field, there are still many school members who have not fully supported inclusive practices. Support from the community, parents, school authorities (school principals, teachers, school staff, students) has not yet fully implemented inclusive education (Alothman, 2014). Support for GTs and special assistant teachers (SAT) still needs to be improved, such as developing various instructional strategies in inclusive classroom. Besides, the involvement of school principals in determining policies and rules for inclusive schools must continuously improve to implement the quality of inclusive education practices maximally (Villa & Thousand, 2016). All policies must be based on principles. The latest scientific developments must continuously upgrade to ensure inclusive practices in inclusive elementary schools can carry out properly. Meanwhile, the improvement of inclusive services, which are the duty of school staff, must continuously be improved. Such as the provision of facilities and infrastructure for inclusive schools that are suitable for an inclusive environment to support all students' academic and non-academic activities in inclusive elementary schools.

Mentoring programs for inclusive schools that universities can also carry out must also increase instruction in inclusive classrooms (Sharma, 2018). The problem that often occurs and is most important in inclusive classrooms is the difficulty of GTs in designing effective instruction strategies that suit the needs and characteristics of all students. The university expected to develop various innovative and creative instruction strategies, and the results can implement in inclusive elementary schools. This statement, as stated by one of the GT:

"I hope the university can develop methods of innovative learning that can be practiced in inclusive classrooms so that instruction can take place following the characteristics of an inclusive classroom."

In line with the development strategy of instruction in an inclusive classroom, the fundamental thing is very. The university can provide an understanding of inclusive education to all school members. The implementation of inclusive education will not run well if all school members do not understand the nature of inclusive education (Ntombela, 2011). The understanding of all school members about inclusive education has consequences for all procurement of inclusive education components. Components such as inclusive school facilities and infrastructure, instruction, costs to be paid by schools, and readiness of human resources are part of school assistance that can carry out between universities and inclusive elementary schools (Ediyanto et al., 2017; Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

University assistance to inclusive elementary schools is a form of moral responsibility in the success of inclusive education. Universities must produce graduates such as elementary school teacher education courses who must teach in inclusive elementary schools with diverse or inclusive students. Graduates must overcome all the problems that occur in inclusive classrooms based on their learning experiences and practices while at university to be applied in inclusive elementary schools. University assistance to inclusive elementary schools must periodically carry out the university's positive involvement in solving problems in inclusive schools (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

**3.2. Majors Relevant to Inclusive Education**

The hope of GTs, which is very important to be provided by universities, is the department that is relevant to inclusive education in universities (Mag et al., 2017). GTs who has been teaching in inclusive classrooms are not relevant or have not received special education about inclusive education. As a result, it is difficult for GTs to practice inclusive education in inclusive classes. The problems faced by GTs, such as understanding the characteristics of SNSs are very important for GTs. So that can do learning problems and how to handle SNSs. Programs relevant to inclusive education, such as special education that are dominant with teachers' understanding of the characteristics of SNSs, creating individual learning programs (IEP), or identifying and assessing students are competencies that GTs must possess. This statement was put forward by one of the GT:

" What I hope is that the college can provide a special education department because there are very few universities that provide that department in Indonesia. Even though all teachers now have to teach inclusive classes. "

The university must meet the limitations of every inclusive school, especially in improving the quality of inclusive teachers (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). Conditions in inclusive schools, not all GTs who teach in inclusive classrooms have a special education background that focuses on handling SNSs. The rules in the current government, general schools must accept SNSs regardless of their students' family background and characteristics. Consequently, all GTs must be able to serve and carry out instruction with the characteristics of all students. So, to overcome this condition, universities are expected to organize majors relevant to inclusive education. Such as a special education major, or at least there are courses education inclusive in the teacher education major so that graduates or teacher candidates can practice courses inclusive education in inclusive classrooms.

**3.3. Understanding of Students in an Inclusive Classroom**

The problem that GTs often experiences in an inclusive class is the difficulty of GT in understanding the characteristics and types of SNSs. To understand the characteristics of all students, GT must identify and then assess (in collaboration with a psychologist) students who tend to have special needs. To carry out identification, not all teachers understand how to identify and or have the instruments provided by the school (Callejo & Zapatera, 2017). The problem is getting a lot because not all of the GT backgrounds special education teachers or teachers who get courses inclusive education in college, so it is difficult for teachers to carry identification. This statement was made by one of the GT:

" I also need assistance in identifying students so that I know what kind of condition and type of students are."

Another impact is when GT cannot identify all students, including SNSs, then the services provided to SNSs are inappropriate and appropriate. If GT understands characteristics and needs, it will provide some students with certain characteristics with handling and services. The differences and array of diverse SNSs in inclusive classrooms require special focus and handling in academic and non-academic aspects (Pather, 2015; Rasmitadila et al., 2021). In the academic aspect, the instruction method that must be designed by GT must be able to adapt to the characteristics of the SNSs. The material to be delivered by GT can appropriately understand according to the ability SNSs. Likewise, with non-academic aspects, if SNSs experience emotional conditions that are difficult to control, then the GTs will be easier to handle according to the characteristics SNSs.

For this reason, the assistance carried out by universities to inclusive elementary schools, especially in providing an understanding of the characteristics and services of SNSs (Jordan et al., 2009), must be carried out intensively and continuously, both in training activities for GTs in inclusive schools. Another activity is to make scheduled face-to-face visits so that the school always gets the correct and up-to-date information that can practice in inclusive classrooms.

**4. Conclusions**

Thehope of inclusive elementary schools for university involvement in inclusive education in Indonesia can be done in the form of a scheduled mentoring program and is carried out continuously. It is hoped that the engagement of universities in the practice of inclusive education can meet and solve the problems often faced by inclusive primary schools, especially by teachers in inclusive classrooms. Universities must meet the needs of elementary school teacher graduates who will teach inclusive classes based on the problems faced by GTs so far, including in academic and non-academic aspects. The results of this study are very important for universities that provide primary school teacher education and those that conduct courses inclusive education to design courses that are relevant and in line with the needs of teachers in inclusive primary schools. For this reason, all decision-makers at the university must be able to make and establish rules according to the analysis of the needs of inclusive education practices.

**5. Acknowledgment**

The authors wish to thank to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Indonesia as a part of Research Grant (2021). Thank also to the Directorate of Research and Service of Universitas Djuanda which supported the research.

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