

## **A PORTRAIT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CASE STUDY AT UNG LABORATORY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to describe the implementation of inclusive education at the elementary school level from a teacher's perspective, especially English language instruction. The analysis focus on four key indicators: the availability of instructional materials, the preparedness of human resources, institutional support, and parental involvement. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews with a second-grade English language teacher at SD Laboratorium, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, an inclusive elementary school located in Gorontalo, Indonesia. Findings reveal that while learning materials for students with special educational needs are available, they still require further adaptation and creativity on the part of the teacher. Regarding human resources, the teacher has received basic training in inclusive education but continues to face challenges, including the limited availability of special education support staff. Institutional support is evident through training programs and inclusive policies, although budget constraints remain a significant obstacle. Parental involvement is very active, contributing positively to the continuity of learning at home. This study emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts among teachers, schools, government, and parents in constructing an effective inclusive education environment, particularly in the context of English language learning for students with special needs.*

**Keywords:** inclusive education, English language teaching, instructional materials, human resources, institutional support, parental involvement.

## INTRODUCTION

Every child, regardless of background or ability, deserves access to quality education. This belief is supported by national and international legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Indonesia's Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities. These policies emphasize more than just school enrollment, they emphasize the important of meaningful learning experiences in environments that respect and support each student's character. Within this framework, inclusive education has been recognized as a transformative approach that aims to ensure equal learning opportunities for all, particularly students with special needs.

Inclusive education is more than simply placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms. It requires a restructuring of how schools are organized, how teaching is delivered, and how learning environments can support all learners. For children with disabilities such as speech delays, mild autism, or other learning differences, inclusive practices offer a more personalized and supportive way to learning. In this context, teachers play a key role, as they are expected to adapt their methods, materials, and interactions to meet the diverse needs of their students. Essentially, inclusive education promotes classrooms that accommodate diversity as a strength and support each student's development.

In Indonesia, the commitment to inclusive education is reflected in Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009, which encourages schools at all levels, including elementary schools, to provide access for children with special needs. Elementary education is a particularly crucial stage, as it forms the foundation for students' intellectual, emotional, and social development. Therefore, implementing inclusive practices at this early stage is essential, particularly in subject like English, which serve as key elements for students' future academic and communicative competence.

Teaching English in inclusive settings presents challenges. Language learning, which involves listening, speaking, reading, and writing, can be particularly challenging for students with communication or cognitive difficulties. These challenges require teachers to design lessons that are not only pedagogically comprehensive but also flexible and inclusive. An inclusive English classroom must offer differentiated instruction, integrating various learning styles, and provide support every student's development.

The theoretical foundation for inclusive education is grounded in the values of equity, human rights, and social justice (Jacob & Olisaemeka, 2016; Imaniah & Fitria, 2018). This approach supports the right of all children to learn

together in shared environments, free from discrimination. Diversity is seen not as a limitation, but as something that can enrich the learning experience for everyone. A main concept in this framework is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which promotes flexible teaching methods, accessible curricula, and varied ways for students to engage with and demonstrate their learning (Sari, 2022). UDL helps educators create classrooms where learning is more inclusive, engaging, and meaningful for all students.

However, achieving successful inclusive education is not the responsibility of teachers alone. It depends on a broader system of support. Schools need to provide adequate teaching resources, proper training for educators, and a strong institutional commitment to inclusive values. Teachers must be well-prepared to use adaptive strategies and respond to the needs of diverse learners (Warnes et al., 2021; Prestiana & Sugito, 2021). Collaboration among classroom teachers, special education staff, and school counselors also strengthens the learning environment and ensures students with special needs receive the support they require (Pampoulou, 2016; Rasmitadila et al., 2021).

Institutional support includes not only professional development and accessible materials but also effective leadership and inclusive school policies (Beyene et al., 2020; Goncharenko et al., 2022). Leadership plays a key role in resource allocation and in building a collaborative culture where educators, families, and the community work together. Without this structural backing, even highly capable teachers may find it difficult to apply inclusive practices effectively (Carvalho et al., 2022; Rozenfelde, 2015).

Another critical factor is parental involvement. Families who engage in their children's learning, whether through communication, support at home, volunteering, or school decision-making, can significantly improve both academic and social outcomes for students with special needs (Mangunsong & Wahyuni, 2018; Noerviana, 2024; Salianty et al., 2024). Models of family-school partnerships emphasize the importance of empathy, trust, and collaboration (Epstein, as cited in Noerviana, 2024). When schools and families work together, children benefit from a more consistent and supportive learning experience (Lutfiatin, 2020).

Taken together, these perspectives highlight that inclusive education is a shared responsibility. Teachers, institutions, and families must work collaboratively to create learning environments that are appropriate, responsive, and meaningful for all students, especially those with special needs.

Based on this foundation, this study aims to explore how inclusive education is being implemented in English language instruction at the elementary level in Indonesia. It focuses on four key areas: the availability of inclusive teaching materials, teacher preparation and competence, institutional support, and parental involvement. Through this investigation, this study aims to

understand the progress and challenges in inclusive English teaching, to help improve future practices.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how inclusive education is implemented in the English language classroom at the elementary level, particularly from the perspective of the teacher. A case study design was considered the most appropriate for this study because it focuses on exploring a single, information-rich case within its real-life context. This design allows the researchers to closely examine the experiences, strategies, and challenges faced by a teacher working directly with students in an inclusive setting, so that it provides comprehensive insights into everyday practices and factors influencing inclusive English education.

The subject of this study was a second-grade teacher at SD Laboratorium Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, an inclusive elementary school located in Gorontalo City, Indonesia, as he also an English teacher. With over seven years of teaching experience in an inclusive school environment, the participant was selected purposively due to his extensive knowledge and first-hand experience in addressing the diverse learning needs of students, including those with special needs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, guided by open-ended questions that aligned with four key indicators: the availability of inclusive teaching materials, the competence of human resources (teachers and supporting staff), institutional support, and the involvement of parents. Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data, involving the systematic processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The themes were organized according to the research objectives, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the participant's lived experience while offering broader implications for inclusive education practices.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the implementation of inclusive education in English language teaching at the elementary school level. The analysis is based on interviews with a classroom teacher who plays a central role in the inclusive learning process. The data are discussed through four key indicators that influence the effectiveness of inclusive practice: (1) the availability of learning materials, (2) the preparedness and sufficiency of human resources, (3) institutional support, and (4) parental involvement. The empirical findings are further elaborated through relevant theoretical perspectives to deepen the understanding of current practices, challenges encountered, and opportunities for advancing inclusive and adaptive English instruction for students with special educational needs.

### **Availability of Learning Materials**

The interviews revealed that the school has made efforts to provide teaching resources to support students with special needs in their English language learning. These resources include materials that address students' cognitive, linguistic, social, and motor development. However, the teacher emphasized the ongoing need to independently adapt and develop instructional media that are more aligned with the specific requirements of the English subject and the unique characteristics of individual students, particularly those with special needs. As the teacher noted, *"The school provides learning tools, but we still need to create our own media that fit both the subject matter and each child's needs."*

This finding illustrates that although the institution provides sources, it is not yet fully responsive to the necessities of inclusive English instruction. Teachers need to be creative and flexible in adapting lessons for students with special needs, like speech delays or mild autism. For example, when teaching the topic of animals, the teacher utilized images, sounds, and digital applications to help students acquire vocabulary, even if they were difficult to articulate words orally. Additionally, simple worksheets with visual clues were designed to facilitate students' active participation.

These practices align with the theoretical framework proposed by Li et al. (2022), who emphasized that effective inclusive teaching strategies rely on the adaptability of materials and the teacher's ability to integrate them. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach reinforces this view by proposing for the presentation of content in multiple formats to provide for diverse learning styles. Thus, providing inclusive learning materials in schools requires not only ensuring availability and quantity but also focusing on their usability and adaptability that align with students' needs in the classroom.

### **Human Resources**

The teacher reported that he received training on inclusive education organized by both the Ministry of Education and the school itself. However, he expressed that the training had not yet adequately prepared him for the complex realities of inclusive classrooms, particularly in teaching English. *"We've had some training, but we still need more in-depth and continuous training to handle students with special needs effectively,"* he said. This highlights a critical gap in teacher capacity development and a need for more targeted professional support.

Teachers in inclusive settings must run various roles, not only as subject matter experts but also as facilitators who understand child development, diverse disabilities, and effective communication strategies. These responsibilities are especially challenging in English language instruction, which often requires active language use, causing significant difficulties for students with language processing difficulties. Therefore, practical training, such as in using assistive

technology, modifying visual materials, and managing inclusive classroom behavior, is needed.

These findings support those of Deng et al. (2016), who argue that the success of inclusive education is largely depend on teacher readiness. Professional development programs should be designed to strengthen teachers' competence in inclusive instruction and needs-based pedagogical strategies. Similarly, Prestiana and Sugito (2021) underline that human resource enhancement, particularly teacher capacity building, is a crucial investment for inclusive school success. Without ongoing training, teachers may struggle to meet both the academic and social needs of their diverse students.

### ***Institutional Support***

The interview also showed that the school supports inclusive education by offering regular training, professional development opportunities, and inclusive policies. The teacher shared, *"The school is fully supportive of inclusion programs, but the budget is limited, so some needs have to be covered by the parents."* This indicates that despite structural commitment, financial constraints remain a significant challenge to the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Ideally, institutional support should cover adequate budget allocation, continuous teacher development, and inclusive learning infrastructure. When the institution do not have theses, teachers face difficulties in delivering meaningful inclusive instruction. For example, essential tools, standardized inclusive visual aids, or advanced training modules often remain inaccessible due to budget limitations. Consequently, the difficulty in meeting these needs frequently falls to the parents, which may lead to unequal access for students.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical perspectives of Beyene et al. (2020) and Abera et al. (2025), who emphasize that institutional systems are essential to maintaining inclusive education. Schools are not only pedagogical institutions but also managerial systems. When educational systems recognize that inclusion requires different resources than conventional models, strategic reforms, including budget restructuring, mandatory teacher training, and cross-sector collaboration, can be implemented to ensure that all students, including those with special needs, receive equitable and dignified educational opportunities.

### ***Parental Involvement***

The data also indicated that parental involvement in the learning process of students with special needs was notably active. According to the teacher, most parents maintained regular communication through WhatsApp or in-person visits to discuss their child's progress. *"Parents are usually active; they often contact us via WA or visit to talk about their child's development,"* he said. This consistent interaction demonstrates a collaborative effort between teachers and parents in supporting the learning needs of students, especially in a subject like English that

requires continued practice and support at home. Parents were also found to play an important role in reinforcing learning through simple home activities such as vocabulary repetition and image-matching exercises, as guided by the teacher.

These findings support the opinion from Mangunsong and Wahyuni (2018), who argue that active parental engagement can significantly enhance both the social and academic skills of students in inclusive settings. Parental input also helps teachers better understand each child's individual needs and adjust their teaching approaches accordingly. Furthermore, the observed patterns of involvement reflect Epstein's model of parental engagement, particularly in dimensions such as communication, learning at home, and parenting (Noerviana, 2024; Salianty et al., 2024). When parents not only stay informed but also actively participate in their child's learning, a bridge is formed between school and home environments, reinforcing the child's overall learning experience.

This aligns with Lutfiatin's (2020) findings on the value of collaborative school and family partnerships in creating an inclusive learning environment. Through intensive communication, teachers gain deeper insight into students' needs, while students benefit from a stronger sense of safety. In this way, parental involvement becomes more than administrative support, but it also serves as a foundational element in building responsive and empowering inclusive education.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of inclusive education in English language teaching at SD Laboratorium, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, reflects a genuine commitment by teachers to create a supportive and accessible learning environment for students with special educational needs. Teachers have taken initiative to modify instructional materials based on students' individual characteristics, especially through the use of visual media and assistive technologies, despite facing limitations in facilities. While basic training in inclusive education has been provided, teachers still require more advanced, targeted professional development to effectively address the specific challenges of English instruction in inclusive settings.

At the institutional level, the school has demonstrated support through regular training and professional development spaces. However, limited funding has meant that some essential needs are taken care by teachers or parents. Meanwhile, parental involvement has been relatively active through digital communication and school visits, though it has not yet been fully integrated into a systematic instructional framework.

These findings emphasize the need for strengthened efforts in three key areas: teacher capacity, institutional support, and parental engagement. Teachers must receive practical training to bridge students' diverse needs with the

complexities of English language content. Schools should consider increasing budget allocations and providing more adaptable learning materials, while also building collaborative systems for engaging parents. Through such synergy, English language instruction in inclusive contexts can become more adaptive, meaningful, and truly equitable for all learners.

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