Equity in the Classroom: The System and Improvement of Inclusive Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (A Case Study)

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This research aims at figuring out how leadership and teaching strategy are implemented in public and private “inclusive” schools in Yogyakarta and Indonesia, and whether inclusive education brings about effective learning for the students both in terms of knowledge, skills, and values. The school leaders’ and teachers’ challenges and solution in making the inclusive policy work will also be examined. To get both qualitative and quantitative data, this study uses questionnaire, observation, interviews, and participative methods. This study concludes that legal and formal licensing does not guarantee the effectiveness of inclusive school as reflected by the public schools under study. The establishment of inclusive education by means of appointing fails to establish good inclusive education as understanding on the essence of inclusive education can cease to grow in the school, more especially when the leadership does not support the growth. The strong belief and understanding/definition on the essence of inclusive education help the school a lot to grow and seek for alternatives and problem solutions. The combination of classical and pull-out system, if managed well, can be very effective in pushing the students with special needs to catch up with the normal students while the interaction between normal students with disable students can be maintained. The problem of the students with special needs should be the problem of all school citizens, including the regular teachers and fellow students. Intensive communication and information sharing between GPK (Guru Pendamping Khusus) and regular teachers on the progress of ABK (Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus) is immensely important. This study shows that inclusive education in Yogyakarta special province as reflected in the performance of six schools under study is not well developed and needs intensive scrutiny and evaluation by the government. Attention should be pointed to the improvement of the leaders’ and teachers’ awareness on the importance and essence of inclusive education as a means of transformation towards a diversity of sensitive community.

Keywords: inclusive education, system, Indonesia, children with special needs

Background

Although the 1945 Constitution, the basic foundation of the organization of the Republic of Indonesia, has mandated the educational rights for all, until the end of 2009, inclusive education is still a rare thing in Indonesia. Up to 2012, the number of inclusive schools in Indonesia is only 1,500 out of 250,000 conventional schools catering about 50,000,000 students (Media Indonesia, March 2012).

Education in Indonesia is organized mainly by public/government schools and private institutions. In the
case of private schools, the system of segregation based on either religion, ethnicity, or ability, is the most common. The non-segregation public schools are generally held by the government. In these schools, education is offered to students of all religions, all ethnicities, but not to those who have special needs. And the private schools are mostly segregation schools, whether based on religion, ethnicity, or ability/disability.

Faith or religion-based schools are still quite dominant in Indonesia. There are about 44,000 schools with 6.6 million students studying in this type of schools. The number of Muhammadiyah schools (based on Islam) alone is about 10,000. Other religion-based schools under other religious sects, such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Ahmadiyah, Catholic, Christianity, or Hinduism as a whole can reach to 30,000. The number of schools based on UN in central Java province alone reaches 2,719 units. Almost all faith-based schools are exclusive schools, as they only hold one particular religion. In fact, most of the religion-based schools are not willing to accept students who embrace other faiths.

According to statistics, the number of children with disabilities in Indonesia reached 1.5 million (Indonesian Statistics Bureau, 2011). Of these, only about 15% who have received adequate educational services. Educational services for children with disabilities in Indonesia are still very exclusive. They are served in special schools called SLB which stands for “Sekolah Luar Biasa”, whose number reaches 1,684 (Tyomulyawan, 2012). Those educated in SLB are generally deaf, mentally disabled, and physically handicapped children. Children who have other special needs are less well accommodated at this special school.

Because they are used to an exclusive environment, their interaction with the public is not quite good, moreover at boarding SLB, so that, after the graduation, they tend to live exclusively as they used to be. On the other hand, because of the segregation system, in general, normal children do not have the skills to live together with children with special needs. Vice versa, children with special needs are not ready because they do not have the skills to live together with normal children. The children educated in faith-based schools or ethnicities are also lack of sensitivity, respect, and life skills to live with children of other religions or different ethnicity. The lack of opportunity to mingle with others is actually a pretty big loss for the learners.

Yogyakarta (DIY) is a unique special province. Due to the large contribution in the process of securing the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, Yogyakarta is granted and holds a special status as “Daerah Istimewa” until now. One form of the privileges is that the governor is a king, and to be elected as a governor who need not have a general election. Another specialty is the multicultural trait of the region. Due to its high accommodative and social nature, Yogyakarta is visited by many migrants from other regions for study, work, business, or live. From the total number of 3,457,491 Yogyakarta citizens, 3,179,129 are Muslims, 94,268 are Catholics, 165,749 are Hindus, 5,257 are Buddhists, 159 are Kong Huchu, and 506 embrace other religions or cults (Badan Pusat Statistik DIY, 2012).

According to Social Office of Yogyakarta, the number of disabled people in the province is approximately 42,000, and only 30% get access to education, mostly in SLBs (Dinas Sosial Provinsi DIY, 2012). In such a diverse community, segregative schools are not appropriate school models for the people and may endanger the already existing accommodative characters of the community.

Feeling worried about the phenomenon, in 2004, some people began to show awareness of the importance of inclusive schools. This awareness generally emerged among NGOs (Non-government Organizations). For example, LSPPA (Lembaga Studi dan Pengembangan Perempuan dan Anak), an NGO concerning about gender equity and multiculturalism, has started throwing this discourse to public and pioneering inclusive schools since
2004. The government had just started discussing about inclusions in the late 2008 and established some pilot inclusive schools around those years.

The local government has managed to enforce the inclusion issue in its Education Act issued in 2011 (Yogyakarta Special Province, Education Act, 2011). Not much is mentioned about inclusion in this law, but Article No. 9 Act 2 clearly states that schools in Yogyakarta are characterized as discriminative and inclusive. Meanwhile Article No. 32 instructs that schools are forbidden to discriminate children with special needs and children coming from poor family.

Yogyakarta Regulation No. 47 of 2008 on the “Implementation of Inclusive Education” Article 1 Chapter 1 (Yogyakarta Major Regulation, No. 47, 2008) explains that inclusive education is a national education system that includes all the children together in a climate and learns with the proper education and services in accordance with the potential, capacity, condition, and needs of individual learners without distinguishing or discriminating their social, economic, political, ethnic, language, gender, religion, or belief background as well as differences in physical and mental condition. This is in line with Law No. 4 of 1997 on “Disabilities” Chapter 3 Section 6 Point 1, explaining that every disabled is entitled to education at all units, lines, and levels. This article implicitly implies that society, especially the government and the parties executing the policy holder and educators, have an obligation to provide access to education for disabled people, covering three important elements, namely: (1) equal opportunity to get an education; (2) implementation of an adaptive learning system in accordance with the conditions of the students; and (3) submission of material that is tailored to the needs of learners. From the above information, both national and local laws have supported inclusive education.

Inclusive schools, both public and private, have begun to emerge in Yogyakarta province since 2003. Yet their condition and improvement have not yet been examined. This study will explore and reveal the picture of inclusive education system in Yogyakarta special province performed by both public and private education institutions. The data were collected by interview, observation, and documentation study to six inclusive schools in Yogyakarta. These six schools represent public or government schools and private schools. They are scattered in three districts in Yogyakarta province, i.e., Yogyakarta city, Sleman, and Bantul, and represent three levels of Indonesian education, i.e., pre-school, elementary school, and junior high school. All the schools have claimed themselves to be inclusive as reflected in documents, such as school board, label, logo, and other legal documents.

Interviews were carried out to the principal, teachers, parents, and students. Data were collected by observing six classes in the schools under study. Some of the relevant supporting documents, such as curriculum, student’s report cards, school mission, and vision, are scrutinized.

This study is based on the following grounds: Amesen (2009) stated that inclusion may be understood not just as adding on to existing structures, but as a process of transforming societies, communities, and institutions, such as schools, to become diversity sensitive.

While Ballard (2003, p. 59) said that inclusive education is concerned with issues of social justice, which means that graduates entering the teaching profession should understand how they might create classrooms and schools that address issues of respect, fairness, and equity. As part of this endeavor, they will need to understand the historical, socio-cultural, and ideological contexts that create discriminatory and oppressive practices in education. The isolation and rejection of disabled students is but one area of injustice. Others include gender discrimination, poverty, and racism.

Sigurbardotir (2008) outlined the crucial components of inclusive practice as follows. Teachers should:
become aware of and understand the ethical and political issues associated with inclusion; (2) become competent in acquiring relevant understanding of their students and figuring out how their varied competence calls for appropriate individual action; (3) master situation where they give their student groups different assignments in parallel; (4) be able to set a varied group of students task, which they can tackle in concert despite their varied abilities; and (5) master situations where some of the students are tackling criterion referenced tasks (set by the curriculum) while others are grappling with tasks outside the standard curriculum.

**Research Findings**

The study reveals the system and improvement of six inclusive schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia as seen at the following presentation.

**Establishment and Philosophical Platform**

All the public schools under study transformed themselves to be inclusive due to the appointment of the government. At first, these schools are not inclusive, and only educate normal students. But in 2003, through the Decree of Office of Education and Sports, the schools were confirmed as inclusive schools. When asked their philosophy on inclusion, most of them hesitated in providing answers. One of the principals even said that if allowed to choose he would choose not to be inclusive because they felt overwhelmed in managing the school. This reflects that the appointment process fails to establish the spirit and culture of the inclusive schools.

Meanwhile, the three private schools under study were established by the foundation as inclusive schools. So, since the inception, they have declared that their schools are inclusive. The three inclusive schools have strong philosophical foundation, for example, one of the school states that they believe in “Education for All”. This school holds the principle that all children are entitled to an education without having to be distinguished by their backgrounds and abilities. This school also believes that we should appreciate and respect the ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic differences and diversity of all children or students. Another thing that this school views is that education is the activity and the process of teaching and learning to achieve the best potential of human kind. That is why this school supports and facilitates the children’s best potential to develop. Another school maintains its principle that an understanding of diversity and gender equality can contribute to the country and world peace.

**Legal Basis and Licensing**

Almost all public and private schools surveyed use at least two legal grounds below. Education System: Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 Year 2003 on National Education System. In particular, Article 4, states that:

In order to support the improvement of the quality of education in Indonesia, education is held in a democratic and fair system and should not be discriminatory by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values and diversity of the nation.

Beside the above regulation, the three public schools examined use the following grounds: The Government Regulation No. 17 Year 2010 on the Organization of Education, especially Section 130:

(1) Special education for students with disabilities can be held on all lines and types of education at primary and secondary levels of education;

(2) The special education can be done through a special education unit, units of general education, vocational education unit and/or units of religious education.

Meanwhile, the three public schools also use the letter below as the foundation of the implementation of
inclusive education: Ministry of Basic Education Circular No. DG. 380/C.C6/MN/2003. Appealing to organize and develop inclusive education in each district/city of at least four schools comprising elementary school (sekolah dasar), high school (sekolah menengah pertama), senior high school (sekolah menengah atas), and vocational school (sekolah menengah kejuruan).

So, by law, the establishment of inclusive schools is very strong, because the education laws and rules have legalized and regulated its implementation. Moreover, for public schools, the government support and encouragement have dived up to the issuance of the Directorate General of Basic and Secondary Education Circular presented above.

Related to permits, the three public schools have already got all the required operating licenses from the government. Meanwhile, of the three private schools, only one school has obtained the license, while the other two are undergoing the permitting process. In terms of legality, the entire public schools studied are very safe. While from three private schools, only one can be said to be safe. Two others are still struggling to get the legality. The permit to establish inclusive schools issued by the Department of Education and Culture should always be reviewed or updated every three years. Thus, if the implementation of inclusive schools is not going well, the permit may be revoked.

**Reasons to the Establishment of Inclusive School**

The reason for the establishment of inclusive schools is a key and significant step which determines the teaching and learning activities at the school.

When asked about the main purpose of organizing inclusive schools, three public schools surveyed stated that they became inclusive because they were appointed by the Office of Education through the appeal that in each district/city schools there should be at least four schools in each level conducting inclusive education. Thus, the main objective of the establishment of these three public inclusive schools is to meet with the command or appeal of the government delivered through the Office of Education in the district. That is why one of the headmasters does not seem eager to manage inclusive school he leads, because the school to become inclusive is not based on the will of the school itself, but based on the government appeal or appointment. He even openly said that he felt overwhelmed in managing his inclusive school, if he could, he would choose to change the school back into a regular school.

This is very different from what happens in the three private schools under study. The three schools become inclusive because their intention was inclusive at the first place. The intention to conduct inclusive school arose because they concern for the condition of children studying in SLB, as their needs are not really met. For example, children with autism who enter SLB received less attention, as SLB generally educates children with disabilities only. Second, because they believe that segregation and divisions in children education can cease the power of tolerance, which is important for them to live together peacefully in Indonesian and global diversity. The third is their belief that education is for all, without having to distinguish the background of children, and that children are better off brought up with multicultural values.

It is obvious from the above explanation that the public schools have fundamentally different reasons with private schools in implementing inclusive education. And the reason determines the school’s spirit in organizing inclusive teaching and learning activities.

**The Meaning of Inclusive School**

According to Stubbs (2002), having a strong understanding about inclusion is essentially important in
conducting inclusive education. How educators define the term inclusion determines its principles and values, which will determine the results of the work. In other words, Stubbs thought the maintaining success of inclusive education depended on how we define it.

When asked how each school interprets inclusion or inclusive education, the headmasters of six schools have more or less the same answers, although some schools emphasize certain things. In general, inclusion in inclusive education is understood as not distinguishing the social, economic, race or ethnicity, religion and the ability of their students. The ability of the child in question in this context is the ability of the brain and physical, so disable children can be received at this school. Among the six schools, only one school (private) that considers citizenship as something that does not need to be distinguished. Only two schools (both private) mention gender as something not to be distinguished. Those definitions are stated in the official documents, such as decrees, and some of the documents used as the basis for the implementation of inclusive schools. Thus, officially, these schools are not allowed to discriminate against children based on social status, economic status, race, religion, and their abilities as stated in the document.

Nevertheless, in the observations, it is found that there is a discrepancy between the definitions of inclusion that they use to the practices in the field. Because one of the schools (public) bears various identities like gender-based school, international school, and school of noble conduct, the researcher noticed that the school is in confusion on which directions they have to take. As an example, probably to meet with the identity of the school as the bearer of noble conduct, female Muslim pupils at this school all wear veils or hijab, while the boys wear uniforms similar to “baju koko” (male Muslim shirt). The same happens with the teachers. All female teachers also wear hijab and male with “baju koko”. This uniformity does not match with the respect to diversity value that they want to grow in an inclusive school.

In one public school, from all students (176 children) only one student is Catholic. The others are all Muslim. This Catholic kid happens to be a child with special needs (ABK). Besides being discriminated as an ABK, he also gets unfair treatment because he is a non-Muslim kid. This discriminatory action comes not only from the regular teachers but also from their fellow students.

Another example, there is one GPK teacher who is a Catholic. He admitted that he is often considered by several other teachers (regular) as a threat to Muslim students, as he is suspected to transform Muslim students into catholic believers. At the same school, services provided are limited to some specific disabilities. School prefers not to receive blind or deaf students. This is because there is no GPK who can facilitate their needs and the lack of instructional media for them.

In the three private schools under observation, what really happened is relatively in line with the definition used. The students’ background did not really affect their service to them. In one school, the students surveyed embrace various religions. In school events, they use a general pray which is not based on a particular religion. In the opening and closing of the prayer they utter expressions of all the religions embraced by the students.

In these private schools, the source of funds used to manage the school comes from foundations and donations from the students’ parents or family. But in these schools, we can find some students coming from poor families. They do not have to pay any school fee. These schools use a system of cross-subsidies, in which the parents who are able to pay more will pay higher fee to shoulder those with less ability. Therefore, the school operational cost can be covered.
**Values and Policies Developed**

Appreciating diversity, multiculturalism, and tolerance are values generally developed by the schools. Two private schools being examined, use the universal LVE (living values education) as a reference. Each school develops different values, such as responsibility, empathy, environmental education, anti-bullying, gender justice, courtesy, sympathy, and mutual help. One school (private) has used the guideline of ESD (education for sustainable development), which integrates school learning with universal issues, such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development.

In general, they integrate the values under study to the school subjects. They also carry out campaign in various occasions, such as ceremonies, individual communication, socialization to the school committee and parents, and so on. It seems that there are quite striking differences between the implementation of value education in the private schools and the public schools. It appears that these values are more alive and have almost become a culture in three private schools; and still become a lips service slogan to the public school. For example, tolerance towards child with special need is very obvious in the third private school. The students look very appreciative to the children with special needs and help them in some ways which they find it difficult. At one private school, in the classroom, there is an autistic child who likes to overact and does things out of control. Other children in the class seem to respond it calmly and even some kids try to calm him down. Meanwhile, when a similar incident occurred in one of the public schools, normal children’s caring for an autistic child is not yet well developed. When a child is emotionally disturbed, normal kids do not care and even made the atmosphere more rowdy although they had been warned by the teacher. As a result, children with autism become increasingly hysterical.

**Curriculum and Learning Methods**

The curriculums used in almost all the schools studied are regular national curriculums based on competency, with some enrichment and adaptation to accommodate children with special needs. In order to truly accommodate children with special needs, some schools develop what so called individual curriculum which is always controlled through periodical assessments once every half year. Evaluation and learning materials are tailored to the results of the assessment. Exam was made by regular assessment based on prior coordination with GPK. The use of individual curriculum is quite successful in one school (state) as the requirements of children with special needs are met. But in the other two schools (public), the implementation of individual curriculum is problematic due to the shortage of GPK teachers whose duties are to control and evaluate individual curriculum on a regular basis. As a result, the needs of ABK children are somewhat neglected.

In two schools (private), the regular curriculum is enriched not only to suit the needs of students, but also to equip them to face the global competence. In these two private schools, enrichment is conducted in Mathematics, Science, and English referring to the CIPP (Cambridge International Primary Programme), Australian National Curriculum, and EBL (Enquiry Based Learning). With this enrichment, the needs of children with high learning outcomes are accommodated, while the schools also serve children who are academically less capable.

Two private schools implement EBL method to encourage students to think critically and conduct
reflective research through a series of learning activities. Children are expected to seek to know, endeavor to understand, and be motivated to learn through cycles of tuning in, finding out, sorting out, going further, reflecting, and taking action. In addition, the school also implements active learning: A learning that allows students to actively participate in the learning process itself both in the form of student interaction with the faculty and with their fellow students. They also use cooperative learning method which is understood as a learning strategy that highlights the collective attitudes or behavior within a teamwork, to work or to help each other in a controlled cooperation structure.

One of these schools (private) applies differentiation teaching methods. It is understood as a strategy that responds to the needs of disable students as children with special needs (ABK), to provide and facilitate the best learning conditions to suit the needs and potential of the students. The method used is considered to be very conducive and supportive to the establishment of values of respect for differences, empathy, tolerance, and cooperation developed. One school (private) emphasizes on the importance of enjoyable and playful learning, where learning should be nuanced by games and should give the experiences with excitement.

The three schools (public) observed implement more conventional learning methods, in which the teacher at the center is still quite dominant. With the implementation of individual curricula, especially for children with special needs (ABK), the success or failure of learning depends on how much attention is paid to the students. In the case where the number of GPK is adequate, as happened in one school, the learning is progressing well. But when the number of GPK is limited, as happened in two other schools, learning for the children with special needs is somewhat neglected. Things are worse when the atmosphere of the communication link between the classroom teachers with GPK is not smooth, and classroom teachers only focused on what happens to normal children, or feel irresponsible for what happens to children with special needs (ABK). In this situation, ABK is very much neglected. As an illustration, in a math class, students were asked to work on math problems, and after the completion of the assignment, the regular teacher records the students’ marks in her assessment log book. Unfortunately, the teacher did not record marks of the ABKs’, and only recorded those of the normal students causing disappointment among the ABKs.

Once, one of the children with special needs (ABK) suffered from an emotional disorder, so he became hysterical. In such a situation, the regular teacher teaching in the class went on to hold the learning as if nothing happened. He was more focused on what happens to the normal children, and was ignorant of what happened to the ABK. He felt what happened to the ABK was GPK’s affairs, not his.

In the private schools observed, the implementation of inclusive teaching and learning in the classroom is generally in line with the teaching and for normal students, however, because in the inclusive classrooms there are normal children and children with special needs (ABK) (whether physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and/or sensory neurological), so the teachers who teach in inclusive classes in addition to applying the general principles also implement specific principles in accordance with the child’s abnormalities. The GPK in the class is standby to help the regular teacher. In general, the teachers believe that every child is unique, every child has his/her own knowledge and interest of his/her own, and teachers act as facilitators come to help children explore themselves according to each knowledge potential.

Teaching and learning activities are tailored according to the needs and therefore to the child’s placement. The placement of ABK in regular classroom is called full inclusion. Here, ABKs mingle with normal children and study same teaching material. Alternatively, ABK may study in the pull-out model. In the pull-out model, the ABKs study in a special room in which all students have similar special needs. The teacher in the pull-out
model is special teacher in accordance to the lesson, accompanied by a special teacher (GPK). The class was adjusted to the interest or the needs of the students, thus attention to ABK is very adequate.

**Resources**

In all the schools under study, the development of human resources, in particular teachers, is done through participation in various trainings, seminars, or workshops about inclusion held by various institutions, such as the Department of Education and Culture, NGOs, universities, or other institutions both public and private. The coordination with GPKs association in Yogyakarta Municipality is excellent. The GPKs hold regular monthly meetings where exchange of experiences, information, and coordination aimed at improving the quality of inclusive education in Yogyakarta happen. Schools also established coordination with several universities, such as the Yogyakarta State University and the University of Gajah Mada to help conduct the assessment for ABKs at the schools. However, unlike in private schools where any teachers may participate in trainings, seminars, workshops and other forms of improvement on inclusion, in three schools (public), trainings, seminars, or workshops are attended mostly only by some teachers associated with it, in particular GPKs. Attempts to conduct TOT (training of trainers) for all teachers have not been initiated.

Two public schools surveyed feel that the intensity of training and workshops is still low, so, an understanding of how to become a teacher in inclusive schools is not well established and has not spread to all teachers and staff at the two schools. In three private schools under study, it is found out that the school leaders keep improving the teachers and staff awareness and understanding about inclusion through TOT, monthly workshops, group discussion, and shared diary. TOT, monthly workshops and discussion organized by the school principal for internal needs seem to be very effective to build inclusive knowledge and consciousness for all members of the schools without exception.

The headmasters in these private schools believe that the spirit of inclusion should be internalized not only by the GPKs, but also by all the schools citizens, especially principals, representatives, teachers, and administrative staff. Shared diary is also effectively used to establish communication between the teachers and the staff of what is going on in the learning process. Teachers and staff can learn from each other and share experiences or issues and make everyone well informed on what is happening in school-related to inclusion learning process.

Two schools (private) send some of their teachers to intern in inclusive schools that have been established both at home and abroad countries to gain knowledge in a real setting. This method is very expensive though it has been proved to be effective because the internship allows teachers to get lessons that are practical, not merely theoretical.

**The Effectiveness of Inclusive Leanings**

According to the observations, the three public schools have not shown effective inclusion learning, although there is one school showing better treatment to especially students with special needs, stronger initiative, and efforts to educate their students, regardless of the students’ background. The curriculum developed and the methods used have reflected the behavior of inclusive school. But because there are still some school stakeholders, such as teachers, principals, employees, students, and parents who have not shown inclusive behaviors, so the teaching and learning activities are not optimal. In the other two schools, the number of regular teachers as well as students who do not normally show inclusive attitude is higher. This attitude thereby disrupts the learning process of especially the students with special needs who had been received as members of the
school. One of the two schools even has the highest number of ABK in the district, which is 60 students.

The determinant factor of the underdevelopment of inclusive culture at the two public schools is the principals, who do not have a vision of inclusion. They even consider managing an inclusive school as a burden. They even feel that the status as an inclusive school becomes an obstacle for the schools to thrive. One of them even said that the ABKs have caused that the schools cannot compete with the other normal schools to achieve their best. Moreover, today all schools are competing hard by showing the best academic achievement to get a status of excellent school. His statement is contradictory with the concept of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) that schools which apply inclusive education are effective schools as they not only pay attention to its teaching-learning and achievement but also attitude and welfare of each child (UNESCO in Stubbs, 2002).

Another principal said that if allowed to choose, he would choose not to lead an inclusive school. Both headmasters always complained about the inadequate GPKs and the lack of facilities for learning as a constraint. Whereas in the private inclusive schools, GPKs play the role as a facilitator to help in special cases. Regular teachers are expected to understand the meaning of inclusive education well. They are also expected to have inclusive behavior to conduct inclusive teaching and education.

Teachers of the three public schools maintain that they have not organized the inclusive education optimally. One of them stated that the inclusive education in the school is not optimal, because the GPL is inadequate. They said that regular teachers are not able to handle the class alone. Moreover, there are usually six ABKs with different disabilities in each school, not to mention that GPKs normally come only two times a week.

Other teachers state more or less the same thing. According to them, the implementation of inclusive education in their schools is not optimal, because there are many teachers who do not understand the meaning of true inclusion. For example, teachers still tend to discriminate against non-Muslims and ABKs. There are teachers who are ignorant to the academic development of the ABKs. Limited GPKs make inclusion education cannot be optimally accompanied. Consequently, assistance to ABKs should be implemented in turns. Even so, it remains ineffective, because usually one GPK assists four ABKs. Ideally, one ABK is assisted by one GPK, they said.

The responses of students and parents at their (public) schools mentioned above are also less positive. When asked what they think about the students with special needs in their school, one of them stated that “There is nothing special about it”. Another student said further, “But sometimes there are noises. Their behaviors make us lazy to play with them”. The students seem less empathetic and caring towards their ABK friends, and showed no internalization of values as formally (in written documents) upheld by the school. Parents’ responses are relatively indifferent. They assume the presence of ABK is okay or “Nothing special”. Appointment system without a strong commitment to develop inclusion apparently did not result the development of strong inclusive schools.

In general, the three private schools under study show more effectiveness than the other schools. Values of tolerance, respect, and empathy are relatively well developed in the schools. Students normally look very concerned and immediately provide help if an ABK has problem. A child who attends one of these schools when she is about to start eating at home with his family, prays with a neutral manner, which accommodate different religions exactly as she will do in her school and the family members can accept it. It means that children understand the concept of diversity, as well as their families.
One of the students interviewed stated that he was more familiar with different friends and developed a sense of respect, “In the past, it was weird to me or sometimes I even feel scared when I saw disable children or those with special needs. Not anymore now, because every day I interact with kinds of disable kids. It turned out they are good”.

Teachers communicate regularly with GPK and works just as well in while teaching. The ABK issue is not only a problem of GPKs, but the problem of regular teachers as well. Regular teachers seem to have the same responsibility for the problem of ABK. Approaches and methods used provide sufficient space for ABKs to develop. Pull-out learning system also appears to be effective for them.

One of the teachers admits that inclusive education in her school is very positive. She further states that the inclusive education in her school is really good. School members including headmaster, teachers, staff, and students do not distinguish a child by her/his background. “Here, ABK is facilitated by both regular teacher and GPK who work hand in hand. The materials for all children are the same, what differentiate them are the degree and method of teaching/learning”. Both normal and ABK in her school may compete in a healthy way. Tolerance in this place is very high, because the children have been given anti-bullying education.

Another teacher stated that inclusive education in her school is good, but must be developed continuously. The combination of classical and pull-out systems is very good for inclusive schools. He feels really comfortable with this system. Classical system is where all pupils both normal and ABKs learn together in one classroom. While pull-out program is when only ABKs study in one class. Pull-out is conducted based on the students’ psychology records, from which the teacher analyzes, sees shortcomings and potential of the children. Then both regular teacher and GPK make a map, instructional methods, and learning activities in order for the ABK to have meaningful and effective learning. He further states that what has to be improved is a long-term effectiveness plan for ABK students because socialization and improvement should not stop at this school. There must be effective long-term programs, to make ABK children more ready to compete in the wider world.

One of the parents of private school responded positively on the management of his son’s inclusive school as follows: “Education continues to develop according to the times, so that is what makes me choose to send my child to this school. Although I cannot see it now yet, I am sure he will grow and develop into a great one. I love the enquiry method run by the school, because it makes us see that every child has a different intelligence. They also need a different experience and therefore must get different facilitation. This school has done that. For example, my son, Zahfan (who is an autism) likes IT (information technology) lessons, he loves to learn about IT. His curiosity is facilitated by IT teachers. And Zafran’s ability now exceeds his friends”.

What remain to be considered in the future at this school are the capacity and the ratio of the number of children with special needs (ABK) with the normal children. What happens here is the number of ABK is too many, while the number of GPK is not adequate, so that there is less optimal attention from the teacher that can be paid to the children. It should be noted. We cannot let the smart kids or above average kids to wait for their friend in a lecture. However, it is also important that ABKs did not feel left out or neglected.

Conclusions

This study concludes that legal and formal licensing does not guarantee the effectiveness of inclusive school as reflected by the public schools under study. The establishment of inclusive education by means of appointing fails to establish good inclusive education as understanding on the essence of inclusive education can cease to grow in the school, more especially when the leadership does not support the growth. The strong
belief and understanding/definition on the essence of inclusive education helps the school a lot to grow and seek for alternatives and problem solutions. The combination of classical and pull-out system, if managed well, can be very effective in pushing the students with special needs to catch up with the normal students while the interaction between normal students with disable students can be maintained. The problem of the students with special needs should be the problem of all school citizens, including the regular teachers and fellow students. Intensive communication and information shared between GPK and regular teachers on the progress of ABK is immensely important.

This study shows that inclusive education in Yogyakarta special province as reflected in the performance of six schools under study is not well developed and needs intensive scrutiny and evaluation by the government. Attention should be pointed to the improvement of the leaders’ and teachers’ awareness on the importance and essence of inclusive education as a means of transformation towards a diversity of sensitive community.

References


