

Social Interaction Skills of Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Kindergarten

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Abstract—Social interaction skills is an ability that contributes significantly to social and cognitive development, especially in children with special needs. Practitioners in the field proposed that the development of social skills related to social interaction should be the main goal of early childhood intervention programs. For children with special needs, practitioners need to develop an education plan that includes the objectives of social competence, one of which is through inclusive education. The current study will explore the social interaction skills of early childhood with special needs in inclusion class settings. Based on the findings of the literature study: children with special needs are still less likely to interact with peers who develop normally.

Keywords—early childhood inclusive education, social interaction skills, children with special needs

I. INTRODUCTION

The competence of social interaction, as one aspect of children's social and emotional development, needs to be considered because it can have an impact on the overall course of an individual's life [1]. Social interaction with the school environment provides them important opportunities to support their social and cognitive development, and this applies not only to children who develop normally. Social interaction, such as the interaction between teacher-child and child-peers, can help children in adjusting social, emotional and behavioral children in class [2].

Some research results have shown that the ability to interact of children with special needs is influenced by peer skills, and it is very useful to provide children with special needs to interact regularly with children who develop normally [3]. Peer relationships can also affect children's classroom adjustments because these friendships give children a social mirror that is used to assess their developing self-image [4]. Empirical studies of teacher and child relations also show similar results, namely a positive relationship between teacher and child is associated with positive results on child development, including children's social skills [5], psychosocial adjustments of children in school [6], and children's school motivation [7]. Vice versa, negative teacher-child relationships are also associated with undesirable outcomes such as peer dislike [8]. This shows that the social skills of children with special needs are closely related to the social interactions that children build with their teachers and peers. Teachers not only play a role in building positive communication with children with special needs, but also the need to communicate with normal developing children so that they can understand the characteristics and abilities of friends who are different from themselves.

Various early intervention programs have been carried out for children with special needs. For example, training parents and teachers at Head Start to prevent behavioral problems in children and support their social abilities [9]. In addition, a recent meta-analysis [10] provides strong evidence for the Early Intensive Behavior Intervention program to improve outcomes for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). There is also about inclusive education which is being widely discussed by practitioners and researchers. Inclusion education itself is a system used to provide opportunities for everyone. Children with special needs and people with disabilities get equal opportunities in getting education and developing [11]. Some countries recognize the rights of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to understanding this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities. Some countries embody a system of inclusive education at all levels and lifelong learning [12]. Likewise in Indonesia, inclusive education in Indonesia experienced quite encouraging development and received enthusiasm from various circles, especially from education practitioners. But so far in the implementation there are various issues and problems in the field. Based on the results of Sunardi's research on 12 inclusive schools in Bandung Regency and City, in general there are currently five groups of inclusive education issues and issues that need to be observed and anticipated, among others: understanding and implementation, school policies, learning processes, conditions teacher, and support system. These five issues and problems directly and indirectly affect the development of abilities in special needs children. Some examples of problems that occur: in its implementation teachers tend not to be able to be proactive and friendly to all children, causing complaints from parents and making children with special needs as a material of ridicule; there is still a lack of parental understanding of inclusive education (especially parents of regular children) so that it creates contradictory attitudes when their children are schooled together with children with special needs; and many more.

Therefore, based on the literature review above the author aims to describe the social interaction ability of children with special needs in the setting of early childhood inclusive education, namely in Inclusion Kindergarten.

The rest of this paper is organized as follow: Section II describes the literature review. Section III presents the obtained result and following by discussion. Finally, Section IV concludes this work and highlights future work.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the literature review.

A. Ability of Social Interaction of Children with Special Needs Social

Ability is a basic element of interaction. Within the scope of the school, there are many interactions between children with special needs and peers and teachers. Peers are very important for the welfare and learning of children. In peer groups, children interact, share common values and feelings of togetherness [13],[14]. In inclusion classes, positive interactions between children with and without special educational needs are fundamental prerequisites of inclusion. Being accepted as a peer group and a sense of belonging builds a positive self-concept and promotes social inclusion [15] [16]. However, individual characteristics, such as temperament and challenges in the regulation of emotions or executive functions can endanger peer interactions [17], [18]. Therefore, it is necessary for adults or teachers (within the scope of schools) to bridge the interaction between children with special needs and their peers who develop normally.

According to Schaffer the interaction between adults and a child is vertical, representing different knowledge and strengths, while peer interaction is seen as horizontal with the same social strength among the parties. These adults or teachers have an important role in scaffolding children's involvement, not only in activities, but also in interactions [19]. Children also need direct guidance from the teacher, especially for children with special needs. Various studies show that professionals or educators have an important role in encouraging interaction among children, both with and without special needs. To facilitate this positive interaction, it is important to include teacher characteristics and competencies in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Because the lack of teacher competence can hamper the efforts of a teacher to provide the necessary care and education which can have a direct impact on the adjustment of children in the classroom [20]. The lack of teacher competency can also indirectly influence the adjustment of children in the classroom. Teacher's emotional competence can influence the emotional support they give to children and affect the quality of teacher-child relationships [21].

B. Inclusion Education Inclusive

Education is an ongoing task aimed at educating quality education for everyone, while respecting the diversity and different needs, inability, ability, and learning expectations of students and the community, making all forms of discrimination [22]. While the class of inclusion is one of the results of ongoing integration between the fields of early childhood education and the field of special early childhood education. Through inclusive education this can support the right of all children to participate in the natural environment of learning. Inclusion classes themselves are divided into three: (1) full inclusion means students with disabilities receive appropriate services and support for their personal needs in a natural environment such as regular classrooms, playgrounds, family care centers, and childcare centers; (2) partial or partial inclusion means students receive some instruction in the general classroom and some in special classrooms which are often called resource rooms, where they

work alone or in small groups with special education teachers; (3) resource rooms [23].

This inclusive education can be a place for children with special needs to get the same education as other children. In one study, active children with physical disabilities were considered more competent than their normal counterparts [22]. However, care must be taken not to create an artificial atmosphere where children with special needs who show physical skills are considered appropriate and those who are not made feel inferior.

Inclusive classes offer opportunities for children with special needs to learn together with their peers, to learn in heterogeneous groups (part of social learning), to engage in education in a way that suits their skills and needs, in a safe environment that can increase their self-esteem and confidence. Teachers have the role of facilitator to actively teach children (they are not just as mentors) [24]. Fact that inside children's education is driven by tasks and challenges that are in accordance with their developmental stages, teachers can reflect the different needs of educators from all children (i.e. children from disadvantaged social backgrounds, gifted children, children with disabilities etc., and can overcome potential barriers to teaching and assessing individual and group children, can be seen as a basic feature of inclusive education facilities for education.

Children, including children with special needs, have different ways of learning, as well as different speeds and backgrounds. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze in detail their specific educational needs and planned support for children with special educational needs or to plan the educational practice of a child with special needs in close collaboration with parents. In practice, the teacher needs to create an effective educational environment in facilitating the education and development of all children, especially children with special needs.

C. Previous Research Results on the Ability of Social Interactions of Children with Special Needs

Based on the review of 5 indexed journals analyzed by the author regarding the ability of social interaction and early childhood inclusion education. The following is a more detailed explanation, in Table I:

TABLE I. JOURNAL STUDY RELATED TO THE ABILITY OF CHILD SOCIAL INTERACTION IN ARRANGING EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSION EDUCATION

No	Author	Title	Journal	Result
1	Bendova, et al. [25]	Inclusive education of pre-school children with special educational needs in kindergartens	Social and Behavioral Sciences	Kindergarten teachers in the Czech Republic are partly neutral towards child inclusion children with disabilities, but they cannot yet define the difference between integration and inclusion of preschool children with special needs. In addition, facilities in supporting education for children with special needs are also lacking because teacher competence is not yet qualified.

2	Breeman, <i>et al.</i> [26]	Teacher characteristics, social classroom relationships, and children's social, emotional, and behavioral classroom adjuncts in special education	Journal of School Psychology	(1) at the individual level, better social and emotional adjustment of children predicted by teacher-level closeness higher children and better behavioral adjustments are predicted by positive teacher-child and peer interactions. (2) teacher competence is best predicted by positive teacher-child relationships.
3	Suhonen <i>et al.</i> [27]	Children's play behavior and social communication in integrated special day-care groups	European Journal of Special Needs Education	Statistically significant differences between children with and without SEN in both social communication and social games competencies. Especially, children with severe disabilities seem to be left behind in the form of more social play behavior than other children with or without SEN. Interestingly, in children with severe disabilities, their social play decreases even when their skills in social communication increase slightly. These results highlight the importance of playing in early childhood special education and emphasizing the important role of teachers in guiding and supporting the game.
4	Chen, <i>et al.</i> [28]	Social Networks of Children with and Without Disabilities in the Children's Education Special Classroom	Jornal's of Autism Dev Disorder	Network shows that children with special needs form smaller playing networks compared to their normally developing counterparts in class, but there is no evidence to show that children with disabilities are involved in more conflict networks than their friends.
5	Strogilos <i>et al.</i> [29]	Differentiated instruction for students with disabilities in early childhood. Co-taught classrooms: types and quality of modifications.	Journal of Inclusive Education	Teachers plan and apply more instructional rather than curricular or alternative modifications.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the presentation of previous research studies, there were differences in social abilities between children with special needs and children who developed normally. Likewise, children with special needs have different social interaction abilities based on the level of disability or the needs of children. Where the child's social interaction ability is very important to be developed for children with special needs because it is useful for the life of the next child. Based on the explanation of the results of the research above, the ability of children's social interaction is influenced by the interactions that occur between children with special needs and their peers. If the interaction between teacher-child and child with peers is positive, the child's social interaction ability will develop.

Special education and inclusion comes as a solution to overcome this. As explained above, inclusive education

provides and facilitates children with special needs to get the same education as other children. However, in practice it is not without obstacles. Barriers mostly occur in the following 5 aspects: (1) understanding of inclusion and its implications; (2) school policy; (3) the learning process; (4) the condition of the teacher; and (5) support systems. These five aspects inevitably hamper the process of providing needs and education for children with special needs, especially the ability of children's social interaction.

As described by Bendova, *et al.* in [25] that the ability of teachers greatly influences the travel of inclusive education to develop the abilities of children, especially children with special needs. The role of the teacher is very important, not only as an educator but also as a guide for children both during learning and playing activities carried out with other regular children. Because playing activities carried out by children in order to develop their interaction skills still need guidance, not only for children with special needs but for regular children as well so there is no conflict.

If we reflect on ourselves with early childhood inclusion education in Indonesia, which is still not fully run optimally where it has not been able to optimize the development of children with special needs. In addition, the inclusive curriculum also does not exist so that children with special needs who study in inclusive schools use the same curriculum and assessment as other normal children. Whereas when viewed in terms of ability, of course it will be different from the development of other children.

This has resulted in many early childhood educators, especially in Inclusive Kindergarten feeling confused in implementing inclusive education in their kindergartens, which has an impact on the ability of teachers to teach inside and outside the classroom. If the teacher understands and applies it in practice this inclusive education is good, it will have a positive impact on the development of children, both regular and with special needs.

In addition, children who are the closest people to children other than teachers at school have an equally important role. Children build a lot of communication with them, both during learning and playing activities. Therefore, the importance of providing understanding to regular children in order to understand differences and want to play with children with special needs.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This literature study describes the social interaction abilities of children with special needs who are in the setting of early childhood inclusion education. Where the ability of social interaction can be seen from the interaction between children and teachers and their peers. The results of the literature study show that children with special needs have positive interactions with teachers and peers can show positive results also on their social interaction abilities. However, regarding the characteristics and abilities of teachers in learning in inclusive schools that have a direct impact on teacher and child interaction has not been discussed. As well as specific strategies in developing social interaction skills of children with special needs have not been discussed.

Therefore, further research is needed to explore the characteristics and abilities of teachers in interacting with

children with special needs. As well as a further review of effective strategies for developing social interaction skills of children with special needs.

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