

From Awareness to Practice: Addressing Behavior, Accommodations, and Universal Design for Learning

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Abstract

Inclusive education requires serious collaborative efforts. Teachers often encounter significant issues in designing and carrying out the learning process. This is a case study of major issues at a private school in Surabaya, Indonesia. Based on the mapping of themes, three issues were considered urgent to address: behavior, accommodation, and Universal Design for Learning. This study made attempts to bridge existing theories and their implications in the field.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Behavior Intervention, Accommodation, Universal Design for Learning

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education remains a debatable issue in Indonesia. Recently, the Indonesian government emphasized the urgency of in-service training to equip teachers with the skills required to provide better services for students with special needs (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Indonesia, 2026). The Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education reported that as of September 2025, there were 363.921 students identified with special needs (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Indonesia, 2026). Out of that population, 199.375 students receive services in 60.910 inclusive education settings (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Indonesia, 2026; Mulya, 2026). However, only 15% of those education settings were equipped with special education teachers (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Indonesia, 2026; Mulya, 2026). These numbers reflected the significant lack of special education teachers in Indonesia.

Inclusive education is supposed to equal opportunities for all types of learners to acquire access to Least Restrictive Education (Baek et al., 2024). However, its implementation is not always smooth. What the theories say might not necessarily be exercised as-is in classrooms. This study aims to explore issues and barriers arising from the existing case. Data and phenomena were gathered upon the school's request for an in-service regarding inclusive education.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study method, particularly exploratory form. Exploratory study has a characteristic of enduring data and then finding patterns in the collected data (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2012). Case study is deemed suitable for this research because it is considered obtaining insights into the topic, which are familiar and relatable to the similar population (Gay et al., 2015). A case study research method is also appropriate when the research is aimed to answer questions which require description and exploration (Gay et al., 2015). It is a study which is in-depth and reflects the participants' perspectives regarding the phenomenon (Gall et al., 2007). A case study, in essence, requires that the researcher conduct a thorough examination which involves a single group, situation, or site (Wiersma, 1995). Therefore, a case study research method was deemed appropriate for this research.

The study involved teachers and staff of a private school in Surabaya, Indonesia. Although this school does not classify itself as an inclusive school, there are students who are identified with special needs and/or behavior disorders. Those students were well distributed across almost every classroom at every grade level. 27 teachers and staff members became respondents and provided data.

In response to the existing needs, the research team made a list of each grade-level's needs and concerns. Those issues were coded into general themes, which should be addressed in an in-service program. Throughout the program, the research team gathered additional data on the current issues in the school. Teachers and staff members were asked to scan a barcode linked to a Google Form questionnaire.

This case study is part of a community service initiative conducted by a team of lecturers and students from the Teacher Education Department. The topic falls under the general doctoral research written by the researcher. The study obtained ethical clearance from the University of Muhammadiyah, Malang. It was issued to protect the participants' rights and confidentiality, required by the university ethics committees.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teaching students with diverse needs and levels of ability could be challenging. The issue would be even more significant when some of the students were children with disabilities and/or behavior disorders. Based on responses from the participants, there were several prominent issues that repeatedly occurred in this particular school setting. Those issues were classified into major categories, such as disruptive behavior, accommodation, and Universal Design for Learning. Further details of information are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Urgent Needs in Each Grade Levels

No.	Grade Level	Concerns	Category
1.	Elementary School	Student with superior abilities showing communication problems and hyperactivity	Behavior
2.	Elementary School	Student with ADHD showing difficulties keeping up with grade-level lessons	Accommodation
3.	Elementary School	Student who is a slow learner with mood swings	Behavior
4.	Elementary School	Student who often throws tantrums	Behavior
5.	Elementary School	Student who is a slow learner whose parents show a low level of attention	Behavior
6.	Junior High School	Teaching strategies for inclusive education classrooms	UDL

7.	High School	Teacher trainings for inclusive education strategies	Accommodation
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Table 1 shows some issues which require immediate action. The research team further explored the teachers' and staff's needs by making inquiries. The participants were requested to fill out a Google Form questionnaire to enable the research team to map out the categories better. As a result, the research team obtained a more detailed mapping, which is displayed in Figure 1 below.

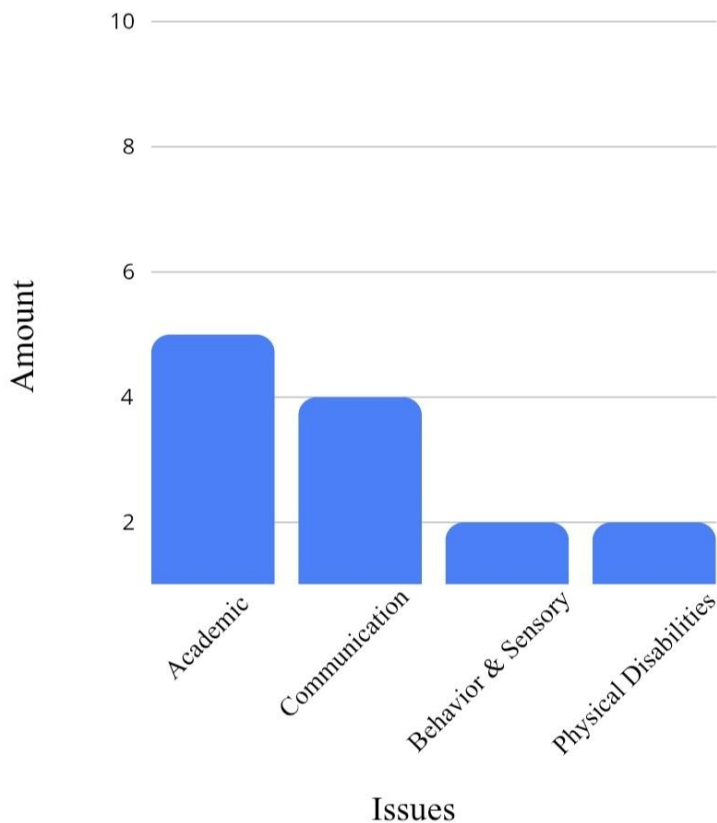


Figure 1. The Reported Issues at School

The themes in Figure 1 is in sync with the preliminary themes in Table 1. Therefore, the following part of this study would describe the theories and some suggestions which are likely applicable in an inclusive education setting.

Challenging Behavior

Students' behavior might cause a major challenge in the learning process. The number of students who show negative behavior issues is likely less than that of the opposite; however, they require "significant amounts of expertise, time, and resources" (Eber et al., 2002). When teachers have to spend their energy dealing with negative behavior, it could potentially take away a major allocation of time. That way, the learning process is disrupted until the negative behavior is more or less manageable. It remains a substantial problem, not only for teachers and classmates, but also for the community (Harvey et al., 2009). When the majority of class time is interrupted, resources may be wasted as well.

Teachers across grade levels constantly deal with students' negative behavior inasmuch as they can develop awareness and strategies to handle it. Teachers should consider alternative styles of discipline (Lewis, 2001). Instead of thinking about disciplinary actions, teachers need to shift their paradigm into Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) designed to improve social and academic behavior outcomes for the entire body of students (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). PBIS is designed for the schoolwide system to 1) ensure that decisions are made based on data regarding "the selection, implementation, and progress monitoring of evidence-based behavioral practices;" and 2) channel resources and systems to improve durable implementation fidelity (Harvey et al., 2009). When the whole school system acts together to exercise the expected behavior, the school might build together constructive relationships and support networks among its members (Eber et al., 2002).

Accommodation

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *accommodation* as "the act or process of changing something to fit a new use or situation." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) When classical ways of teaching and learning processes no longer serve the diverse needs of students, teachers need to find alternative ways to deliver the materials. The school needs to consider providing accommodations for students with learning, medical, or emotional disabilities, which might significantly limit their academic functioning (Martel et al., 2022).

Accommodation is rooted in teachers' understanding, which acknowledges the students' diverse needs. It would provide supports for students with disabilities or those who are at-risk, in inclusive educational settings (Baek et al., 2024). Through adjustments in the learning processes, teachers may provide opportunities to develop positive interactions between students and with students (Baek et al., 2024).

Accommodation does not need to be lavish. It may take the form of as simple as adjusting classroom seating positions and allowing students to take tests and exams in a quiet, separate location in school (Martel et al., 2022). When the school cares for both the students and teachers, accommodation would naturally happen due to proactive actions instead of punitive. It would significantly reduce the level of anxiety and improve academic performance (Martel et al., 2022).

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning first emerged from architecture, with the concept of designing physical environments for all types of individuals to use (Nelson, 2014). A building which is appropriately designed and built right from the start to serve each individual's needs, it would be suitable and safe for all types of users. In terms of education, this concept enables schools to design learning environments which meet the needs of the students (Meyer et al., 2014). For example, a ramp for individuals with physical disabilities may also be functional for all types of individuals as well.

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) structured the UDL framework around three main principles: representation, expression, and action (CAST, 2024). Basically, when a school has designed and implemented appropriate learning environments for individuals with disabilities, other individuals, even those without disabilities, might also benefit. A school that implements Universal Design for Learning would ensure that all types of learners have access to and participate in meaningful and challenging learning activities (CAST, 2024). The use of technology remains to be explored in terms of operating UDL (Bray et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is a multifaceted topic. In this particular study, the research team has described three major issues, i.e., behavior, accommodation, and Universal Design for Learning. Due to the nature of a case study, these results might vary in other settings. However, some of the

principles and descriptions might be applicable for further investigations. They tend to occur in any school setting or learning environment. There is a vast array of opportunities to conduct further studies in each issue. Therefore, there are also more opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Lily Eka Sari: Writing – Original Draft; Fiona: Data Analysis; Jeremy: Conceptualization; Christy: Project Administration, Resources.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare no known financial conflicts of interest or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this manuscript.

DECLARATION OF ETHICS

The authors declare that the research and writing of this manuscript adhere to ethical standards of research and publication, in accordance with scientific principles, and are free from plagiarism.

DECLARATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors declare that Generative Artificial Intelligence and other assistive technologies were not excessively utilized in the research and writing processes of this manuscript.

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