

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL ASSISTANT TEACHERS IN FACILITATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In inclusive education programs, special assistant teachers are one element that has a very important role. This research aims to: 1) Describe the role of special assistant teachers at MIM PK Kartasura and 2) How to facilitate learning for children with special needs at MIM PK Kartasura. The research method used is descriptive qualitative research, using interview, observation and documentation data collection techniques. The validity used to test the validity of the data is triangulation. Data analysis uses power triangulation. The subjects of this research include the school principal, four special assistant teachers, and two children with special needs, while the object of the research is the role of special assistant teachers in facilitating inclusive learning in schools. The results of the research show that: 1) The role of special assistant teachers is: carrying out the initial identification process, conducting assessments, reviewing evaluations, creating individual learning programs, providing learning assistance to children with special needs, assessing the learning of children with special needs, needs and intensive special assistance. 2) Special accompanying teachers in facilitating inclusive learning for students with special needs are carried out by adapting to the students' conditions. In facilitating students with special needs special accompanying teachers collaborate with class teachers. Forms of collaboration include: providing suggestions for effective learning strategies, providing training to support students, helping design Individual Learning Plans (RPI).

Keywords: *special assistant teachers, inclusive education, inclusive schools, children with special needs*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the right of every citizen as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution Chapter XIII Article 31 paragraph (1). The right to education is not only for ordinary children, but also for children with special needs. Children with special needs also have the right to education that is equal to other children. Children with special needs (ABK) are children who experience abnormalities or deviations in the growth and development process compared to other children their age. (Azmi & Nurmaya, 2020). Children with special needs are children who experience various differences in growth and development compared to children in general. (Khairun Nisa et al., 2018).. Children with special needs are children who have abnormalities in physical, mental, or social behavioral aspects. (Rezieka et al., 2021).. They also have the opportunity to get education through inclusive education services.

Inclusive education is one of the government's efforts to provide equal opportunities in education, especially for individuals with disabilities. (Hanaa & Mia Evani, 2022).. Inclusive education is education that accommodates all students of various diversities, whether children have obstacles or not. (Nurfadhillah, Cahyati, et al., 2022).. Inclusive education is an approach to meeting educational and learning needs focused on those with special needs (disabilities). (Lalak Muslimin & Muqowim, 2021).. Inclusive education is an education system that provides opportunities for all students with special needs to learn together with students in general, by paying attention to the needs and abilities of each student, so that they can participate in learning with their peers. (Arriani et al., 2021)..

Inclusive education can be implemented in primary schools and inclusive schools. Based on government regulations, public schools are required to accept students with special needs or in other words, public schools are required to become inclusive schools. (Danny Ontario Rusmono, 2020). Inclusive education is education that focuses on providing services to all learners without distinguishing their characteristics and recognizing that all learners have unique, diverse, and unequal needs. (Susilowati et al., 2022).. Inclusive schools are formal education institutions that provide education for children with special needs together with other students, according to their needs (Fajra et al., 2022). (Fajra et al., 2020).. An inclusive school is a school that offers an appropriate and challenging educational program, while being adapted to the abilities and needs of students. (Lattu, 2018). Inclusive schools are regular schools that accept both students in general and students with special needs, by involving students with special needs in the teaching and learning process while adjusting to their needs and abilities.

In inclusive schools, the role of the teacher is very important to assist students in achieving learning success and learning goals. In addition to the role of the class teacher, the role of the

special assistant teacher is also very crucial in learning in inclusive schools. Special assistant teachers are teachers who have an educational background as a teacher and have attended inclusive education training organized by the government. (Puspitaningtyas, 2020). Special assistant teachers play an important role in the teaching and learning process in inclusive schools. They are teachers who directly assist children with special needs in schools that organize inclusive education. (Fatimah et al., 2021). A special assistant teacher is a teacher who accompanies children with special needs while at school and serves as a liaison to convey instructions from the class teacher. (Berlinda & Naryoso, 2018)..

Special assistant teachers play an important role in learning in inclusive schools. The duties of the special assistant teacher include helping children with special needs who are facing difficulties, grouping these children according to their type of needs, and helping to explain material that has not been understood by them. (Puspitaningtyas, 2020). Special assistant teachers are teachers who accompany children with special needs during the learning process and convey information from homeroom teachers so that the teaching and learning process can run smoothly. (Berlinda & Naryoso, 2018). The role of special assistant teachers includes: designing and implementing special programs, modifying teaching materials, conducting identification and assessment, developing programs, evaluating programs with class teachers, and compiling reports on programs and child development. (Marvianita, 2021). Special assistant teachers have an important role, but in some inclusive schools there are still no special assistant teachers.

In inclusive schools, special assistant teachers play a crucial role in providing services and learning for students with special needs. (Mokoagow, 2021). The role of special assistant teachers in the implementation of inclusive education is to provide special learning, for example by conducting home visits that are tailored to the parents of students. (Giovani, 2022). Special assistant teachers as the center of education have an important task in assisting children with special needs in implementing inclusive education. (Azmi & Nurmaya, 2020).. The role of the special assistant teacher is to change student behavior so that they have commendable behavior. (Nurfadhillah, Hasanah, et al., 2022).. The role of special assistance teachers is: identification and assessment of special needs programs, preparation of special needs programs, evaluation of special needs programs. (Ansari et al., 2021)..

The absence of special assistant teachers in inclusive education in schools can result in unachieved goals and suboptimal learning implementation. Without a special assistant teacher, special guidance is lacking, and the preparation of learning plans that suit students' abilities and needs is difficult. (Herawati et al., 2018). The absence of a special assistant teacher means that there is no one to help the teacher and is unable to assist diverse students. (Syamsiyah, S.H.I., M.Si.,

2022).. The absence of special assistant teachers results in children with special needs being at risk of not attending classes and eventually dropping out of school. (Wilyanita et al., 2022).. The Special Assistant Teacher (GPK) is tasked with accompanying, assisting and guiding students with special needs in the teaching and learning process.

Based on this explanation, this study aims to: 1) Describe the role of special assistant teachers at MIM PK Kartasura and 2) How to facilitate learning for children with special needs at MIM PK Kartasura. The research will use qualitative methods with data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observation, and documentation. This research will be conducted by researchers at MIM PK Kartasura.

METHODS

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Descriptive strategies are used by researchers because they aim to describe or explain a situation or event, especially in terms of teacher limitations in dealing with children with special needs. (Bahri, 2022). Qualitative research is an investigative process that is carried out naturally and in accordance with the existing situation in the field without intervention or manipulation. Qualitative research can also be interpreted as a type of scientific research that is not based on statistical calculations, but emphasizes an in-depth understanding of social phenomena or human behavior. This approach tends to use data in the form of narrative descriptions in the form of words to explain and understand the complexity of a problem or phenomenon under study. (Adlini et al., 2022).. The data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observation, and documentation. Researchers conducted interviews, observations, and document collection to collect the necessary information. The collected data were analyzed in the form of short narrative descriptions or texts, focusing on careful observation and detailed descriptions in relevant contexts. Comprehensive interviews, document analysis, and important notes became part of the analysis process.

The stages of data analysis consisted of data reduction, where data was simplified and summarized for ease of understanding; data presentation, which highlighted key points while maintaining the authenticity of the information; and finally, drawing conclusions and verification, to make provisional conclusions that could be verified throughout the research. This data analysis process took place iteratively to ensure that the data collected was analyzed thoroughly and in depth throughout the data collection process.

Data validity was tested using triangulation. This method was applied by researchers to test the validity of information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. With this method, researchers can ensure that the data obtained is valid and not the result of other studies.

The subjects in this study included the principal, four special assistant teachers and two children with special needs. This study aims to investigate the role of special assistant teachers in facilitating inclusive learning at MIM PK Kartasura in April 2024. The researcher has developed research instruments in accordance with the purpose of the study and the type of data required as sources of information.

Data for this study was collected through interviews and participant observation. The interview process involves a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee, while observation is done by observing the situation. The research instruments included an interview schedule and a data collection sheet. The interview schedule was used to organize meetings and a list of questions, while the observation sheet served as a checklist to record observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A. Role

Based on interviews and observations with special assistant teachers at MIM PK Kartasura school, their main task is to support classroom learning, especially for students with special needs. Their role is crucial in bridging classroom learning needs as well as in the development of comprehensive education administration in an inclusive school environment. Special assistant teachers routinely act as facilitators for normal students and students with special needs in the classroom.

In addition, the special assistance teacher is responsible for communicating with parents or guardians. In the event of an incident where a regular student is injured by a student with special needs, the special assistant teacher and class teacher should immediately coordinate with the parent or guardian to provide an explanation. The role of the special assistant teacher is very important to ensure the implementation of effective learning in inclusive schools, both for students who have special needs and those who do not.

Table 1. Interview Results

No.	Informant's initials	Aspect asked	Interview results
1.	Principal	Principal's role in inclusive education	The school principal has decided to make the curriculum more flexible so that it can be adapted to the abilities of students with

			special needs. Based on field observations, in the learning process in the classroom, teachers modify and accommodate by reducing the subject matter for these students. In addition, evaluation is done with great flexibility, encouraging teachers to be more creative in designing learning that suits the needs of students with special needs.
2.	Gpk 1	The role of special assistant teachers in inclusive education	I design lesson plans according to the abilities of children with special needs and keep them short because they tend to forget quickly.
3.	Gpk 2	The role of special assistant teachers in inclusive education	Provide support to children with special needs who face difficulties while learning
4.	Gpk 3	The role of special assistant teachers in inclusive education	Provide consistent instructions and record information specific to children with special needs during their learning activities, making it easier to understand in the event of a change of teacher.
5.	Gpk 4	The role of special assistant teachers in inclusive education	Together with the class teacher and subject teacher, the support teacher participates in the preparation of educational assessment instruments. In the field, the support teacher's role is to assist without developing individual learning plans for children with disabilities. Instead, each week the support teacher provides a report to the class teacher and parents. Individual learning plans for children with disabilities are prepared by the class teacher after discussion with the support teacher.
6.	Abk 1	Does this Gpk help you in learning?	Helping sis
7.	Abk 2	How does Gpk help you when studying	Usually directed or modeled first

The duties of the educator also include obligations such as directing, surveying, teaching, and other tasks as described earlier. There are some key duties for classroom educators, namely: 1) Creating a conducive learning environment for students to focus on in class or school, 2) Plan and evaluate scientific and non-scholastic education for all students together with the special teaching teacher (GPK) to determine their capacity and needs, 3) Collaborate with GPK in the preparation of learning plans or individualized learning programs (IEPs), 4) Implement learning exercises, assessments, and follow-ups according to the established learning plans, 5) Adjust teaching methods to meet the needs of individual students by providing remedial, enrichment, or acceleration programs, 6) Organize classes according to their specializations, 7) Develop projects and organize guidance exercises for all students.

Meanwhile, the duties of special assistant teachers in inclusive schools include assessing, evaluating, designing individual learning programs, providing learning support to children with special needs, and assessing their learning. According to the interview results, the special assistant

teacher is needed to assist students who need guidance in the learning process. In addition, this teacher manages time allocation by applying the take out model, which allows students with unique needs to be moved from one classroom to another to receive various forms of learning support. In this context, special educators focus more attention on unique projects, especially the take out program.

Based on documents owned by special assistant teachers, there are data, media, and teaching materials used by GPK. The main focus is on the evaluation media used in the assessment process. The evaluation includes program assessment as well as instructional performance evaluation for all learners. The results of regular training conducted by educators can improve their understanding and skills in providing instructional assistance in a comprehensive training environment to learners. In addition, there are daily, monthly and semester logbooks that educators fill out each time. With these observation books in place, teachers experience reduced stress levels and increased enthusiasm for their work at school.

B. How to Facilitate

Inclusive learning for students with special needs is carried out by class teachers and special assistant teachers by adjusting student conditions, which adjustments are made to learning methods, materials, and learning media. The implementation of learning for children with special needs is tailored to the needs of each student, so that every part of the school can fulfill its function when children with special needs learn. The role of special assistant teachers in facilitating students with special needs is to help students to remain actively involved in learning, explain material from class teachers to students, and guide students in doing assignments.

Table 2. Observation Results

No.	Aspects observed	Observation result
1.	How GPK facilitates learning	Learning is adapted to the conditions of students with special needs, which includes modification of materials, methods, and learning media. Special assistance teachers collaborate with class teachers in facilitating students with special needs. Special assistance teachers and class teachers work together to serve children with special needs, starting from separating children, supervising children, to organizing Individual Learning Programs (IOPs) for children. Special assistance teachers must understand the individual needs of each student with special needs, whether in terms of knowledge, learning, social, or emotional. In facilitating students with special needs, special assistant teachers adjust learning according to student needs, such as modifying tasks, using teaching materials that suit student needs, or providing support to students.
2.	Students' impressions of the way GPK facilitates them	Happy and feel helped by the existence of special assistant teachers because they can help, guide, and teach them both in materials, tasks, and giving examples.

The implementation of learning for children with special needs is tailored to the needs of each individual student based on observations. Adjusting to student conditions, class teachers and special assistant teachers carry out adaptive learning for students with special needs, which includes modifying learning materials, methods and media. Special assistance teachers need to facilitate

students in changing learning patterns by their parents and focus on guiding children to be able to participate in learning in regular classes. Special assistance teachers conduct initial identification to find out what is needed by students with special needs and then plan the guidance and programs needed by students.

In facilitating students with special needs, special assistant teachers collaborate with class teachers. Forms of collaboration between special assistance teachers and class teachers include: providing suggestions for effective learning strategies, providing training to support students, helping to design Individual Learning Plans (RPI). In facilitating students with special needs, special assistant teachers also need to increase knowledge of inclusion in the school environment. In addition to the school environment, special assistant teachers need to raise awareness about inclusive education to teachers, parents and the community, as an effort to improve facilitation for students with special needs.

Special assistant teachers and classroom teachers work together to serve children with special needs, from separating children, supervising children, to organizing Individualized Learning Programs (IEPs) for children. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) may not be suitable for all children, because not all IEPs can be applied to all students who have diverse needs. Special assistant teachers in regular schools need to know the needs of students, how to handle them, and the type of education needed based on the special needs of the child. The special assistant teacher acts as a forum for the class teacher to help convey material and understanding for students with special needs.

Special assistance teachers must understand the individual needs of each student with special needs, whether in terms of knowledge, learning, social, or emotional. In facilitating students with special needs, special assistance teachers adjust learning according to student needs, such as modifying tasks, using teaching materials that suit student needs, or providing support to students. Special assistance teachers also need to create an inclusive and child-friendly school environment, according to the needs of students with special needs both in the classroom and school environment. Special assistance teachers help students with special needs by building self-confidence, independence, and involving students to the fullest in the school environment.

Discussion

The obligations of special assistant educators in light of the consequences of this research include the following: conducting assessments, checking assessments, creating individual learning programs, providing learning assistance to children with special needs, surveying the learning of children with special needs. Special assistant teachers (GPK) have the responsibility and role of teaching, guiding, assessing and evaluating students with special needs who are assigned to inclusive schools in accordance with the 2007 guidelines for implementing inclusive education. Special assistance teachers are responsible for designing and implementing special programs, identifying students, conducting assessments, assisting students with special needs, providing ongoing guidance, compiling PPI, implementing a modified curriculum with the class teacher, conducting evaluations and follow-up, and coordinating with teachers, schools and parents of students. (Wardah, 2019). The duties of the special assistant teacher include, among others: providing subject matter, working on the development of each student, and motivating all students. (Lailiyah & Jihan, 2020).. The roles of special assistance teachers include: designing and

implementing special programs, modifying teaching materials, carrying out the process of identification, assessment, and compiling programs, conducting program evaluations with class teachers, and making program and child development reports. (Marvianita, 2021). The role of special assistance teachers is: identification and assessment of special needs programs, preparation of special needs programs, evaluation of special needs programs. (Ansari et al., 2021)..

The research findings show that special assistant teachers have an important role in the inclusive school program. The obligations, duties and responsibilities of GPK in assisting students with special needs while attending school cannot be separated from the important role of special assistant teachers. Special assistant teachers play an important role in the assistance program through the fulfillment of their responsibilities, especially their contribution in helping children with special needs. (Hanaa & Mia Evani, 2022). Special assistant teachers have a large and dominant role in providing specialized types of assistance for children with special needs. (Mokoagow, 2021). Collaboration between class teachers and special assistant teachers is very important in providing services for children with special needs. (Nirmala et al., 2022).. This applies to both social-emotional interactions and teaching and learning activities.

The implementation of learning for children with special needs is tailored to the needs of each student based on the research findings. Adjusting to student conditions, class teachers and special assistant teachers carry out adaptive learning for students with special needs, which includes modifying learning materials, methods and media. The implementation of multipurpose learning for children with special needs is tailored to their respective needs, meaning that learning adapts to the conditions of children with special needs, not the other way around. (Puspitaningtyas, 2020). Students with special needs learn with a regular classroom model where they learn with other regular students, unless they are guided independently by a companion teacher. (Wardani et al., 2020). Learning for students with special needs is carried out in collaboration with class teachers and special assistant teachers through joint participation in program preparation and implementation. The implementation of learning for students with special needs by special assistant teachers is by planning PPI first, then lesson plans and then determining techniques and procedures. (Khiyarusoleh et al., 2020).

In implementing inclusive education, special assistance teachers must collaborate with class teachers and parents of students with special needs so that the implementation of special assistance can be optimal and right on target according to the needs of students with special needs. In the implementation of learning for students with special needs, class teachers and special assistant teachers deal directly with students with special needs, especially special assistant teachers. (Yunita et al., 2019). Special assistant teachers are tasked with simplifying learning materials from class teachers to suit the abilities of students with special needs, as well as guiding and accompanying students with special needs individually in the implementation of learning. (Pratiwi et al., 2022).. Learning implementation includes: a) Teachers organize inclusive classes for children with special needs using the area method. b) Teachers deliver learning using a variety of methods that are appropriate to the characteristics and needs of students with special needs. c) Teachers use media that are appropriate to the diverse needs of students. d) Teachers provide assignments and worksheets that are tailored to the characteristics and needs of students. e) Teachers conduct ongoing assessment of the learning process and outcomes. (Aurina & Zulkarnaen, 2022). The implementation of the duties of special assistant teachers in the learning process are: 1) carry out

identification, assessment and PPI, 2) Designing and implementing special programs, 3) Modifying teaching materials. (Liani et al., 2021).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of special assistant teachers is very important in inclusive education programs in schools. This crucial role relates to the tasks, roles and functions performed by special assistant teachers in assisting children with special needs while learning at school. The tasks and roles of special assistance teachers include: conducting initial identification, assessment, reviewing evaluations, creating individualized learning programs, providing learning assistance to children with special needs, and assessing their learning. The intensive and caring function of special assistance teachers is essential to support inclusive education programs.

Special assistant teachers in facilitating inclusive learning for students with special needs are carried out by adjusting student conditions, which adjustments are made to learning methods, materials, and learning media. In facilitating students with special needs, special assistant teachers collaborate with class teachers, forms of collaboration between these include: providing suggestions for effective learning strategies, providing training to support students, helping to design Individualized Learning Plans (RPI). In facilitating students with special needs, special assistant teachers also need to increase knowledge of inclusion in the school environment. Special assistance teachers need to create an inclusive and child-friendly school environment, according to the needs of students with special needs both in the classroom and school environment, so as to build self-confidence, independence, and involve students with special needs to the fullest in the school environment.

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