

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDONESIA : ISSUES AND CHALLENGES¹

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The World Declaration on Education for all (EFA) which has been admitted as the global commitment initiated by United Nation brings a greater trend of inclusion since the last two decades. One of the targets is the completion of the full period of primary education for all children. Historically, the movement of inclusive education in Indonesia was triggered by both the international call for education for all and the nation awareness on the right to education for all children.

In Indonesia, the issuance of National Act by Ministry of Education No. 70/2009 on Inclusive Education has changed more than 1,000 regular schools to become welcoming schools for all children, particularly those with special needs. It means inclusive education service for children with special needs has changed the cultural mindset from exclusion to inclusion.

Despite the constant movement as indicated by fast growing number of inclusive schools, the quality of its implementation remains a big challenge. Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS) which is known as one of the inclusive universities in Indonesia has to shoulder the building of the inclusive community of the nation. In 2012, UNS has been awarded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia as a university to hold inclusive education in Indonesia through the following efforts: (1) providing access for people with special needs, (2) establishing a Center for Disabilities Studies, (3) enclosing inclusive education course in the curriculum of all of departments in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, and (4) developing network and cooperation to enhance the inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive education, education for all, historical perspective.

Introduction

The increasing demand on education for all has been the world concern since a half century ago. It began in 1948 when the United Nations stated Universal Declaration on Human Rights asserted that 'every one has the right to education'. It is explicitly stated in the article 26 of the declaration that requires the elementary education be both 'compulsory and free'. Unsurprisingly, it is constantly becoming stronger ever since the last two decades. As it was promulgated in the The World Conference in Jomtien, Thailand, the glowing spirit

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of Education For All (EFA) was agreed in a framework for action as a vision of meeting basic learning needs for every body.

During nineties, similar agreements were signed such as in Salamanca Conference and Declaration on Special Need Education (Mayor, 1994) and World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (2000) which ended up in collective commitments (UNESCO, 2000). One of the six goals regarding the EFA stated in the collective commitments is *“ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality”*. Such an international ringing call for EFA is now even shaking most of the countries particularly in the southern hemisphere of the world. Now that inclusive education is derived from EFA is there to embrace the big number of disadvantaged school-aged children from the excluded access to education. The current hearting reality, however, shows that children with disabilities are waiting at the back line of the educational queue (Hegarty, 2003).

In Indonesia, the issue of inclusive education began from the two major facts of discrepancies in education, legal statement and implementation. Legal statement requires that pupils with special needs be mainstreamed in regular schools. In this point, it is strongly believed that efforts to provide high quality of education in the respective schools can make meaningful contribution to securing EFA. The practice, on the contrary, indicates that several challenges need to be resolved. To some extent, the slogan of inclusive education remains like a backdrop covering the very outer surface of EFA. Struggles need to be afforded as to open the cover and see what is really inside and beyond EFA. In this way, the questions of what inclusion is and what it means to be inclusive for children with disabilities are achieved.

What to be Inclusive Means

Inclusive education basically refers to education that responds to the unique needs of individuals in the society. Responding to children with diversity is considered the most significant consequence of change in special education (Shaeffer, 2005). Particularly in the field of educational services, integration and inclusion serve as the latest forms of special education development education for all. As the latest trend of education services, inclusive education was initiated to give wider opportunity for marginalized children to have equal access to education. Marginalized children are those with physical, intellectual, and or

handicapping condition that interfere them with learning. They have special needs to be fulfilled for a better development.

To respond to the issues of diversity in the school settings, Ainscow (2003) set up an idea on what it means for children with special needs to be inclusive. One thing to keep in mind that inclusion is filtered out from the elements in the environment, culture, and local history. There are four prominent elements featuring that an education system is inclusive. a). Inclusion is a process of searching for ways to respond to both the diversity, that is, learning how to live in diversity, and learn how to learn from differences, b). Inclusion is related to identifying and removing barriers by means of information from various sources to make improvements through policy and implementation, c). Inclusion is connected to attendance, participation and achievement for all students to improve the quality of experience through the curriculum available in schools, d). Inclusion is catered primarily for students who are marginalized, neglected, or those who are not achieving in schools.

In almost the same the point of view, (Sandkull & Heijnen, 2005) in International Symposium, 2005 in Bukittinggi, Indonesia defines inclusive education as a strategy of implementing the approach to the rights of children to education, especially for those who are marginalized. Inclusive education, as such, holds the principle of equal rights, respect of differences, and understanding the needs of all by removing the obstacles in the living environment. In broader sense, inclusive education means finding ways to embrace children with special needs all the ways to learn to live and feel safe physically and, psychologically in social harmony. An inclusive school is indicated by the opportunities that all children develop the sense of solidarity, belonging, and partnership. Other children have to feel every one else as a group member, and all children also should feel as a member of the group (Halvorsen & Neary, 2009). To build an inclusive school means building building collaboration among the school community members in commitment to educational services for children with special needs.

National Policies on EFA

Legal view of education for all inspires how inclusive education is should be running on the right position. The strength of laws and statements of commitments touch and form a positive attitude towards differences. As the internal strength in Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution is the main foundation to embrace the children's rights to education. Such the

rights are explicitly mentioned in article 31 paragraphs (1): "Every citizen shall be subject to basic compulsory and free education". Specifically relating to the rights to education for children with special needs, the rule is quoted in Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System. Article 5 paragraph (2) mentions the "Citizens who have any physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and / or social deviation are entitled to special education." In the other article that is Article 32, paragraph (1) also mentioned the "Special education is education for students who have a certain degree of difficulty that impedes the learning process due to the physical, emotional, mental, social aberration and / or those with highly intellectual potential and special talent." These legal statements would not be meaningful in action without further rules of implementation. This is in fact the responsibility of Ministry of Education.

Milestones of Inclusive Education in Indonesia.

Basically, the inclusive education is the most current trend in special education. Special education in Indonesia is managed in three (3) settings of services; segregation, mainstream / integration, and inclusive services. Segregation service takes place in Special Schools (SLB), while integration and inclusion services are conducted in regular schools. Special regulation on inclusive education was not written in law until 2009. However, since 2003 the provision of education services for children with special needs have been conducted in regular schools where they live nearby. For those with certain reasons, special schools could be the best place for their education.

Segregating system of special education was born as early as the special education service in Indonesia. It was in 1901 that the first Special School for the blind was opened. The school was established by Westhoff from Holland. In 1927, Special School for children with mental retardation was opened in Bandung, West Java and three years later in 1930 Special School for the deaf was established in Wonosobo, Central Java. Since then more Special Schools were opened for children with different abilities up to 1980an.

In addition to segregating system, particularly, children with visual impairment and physical handicaps could go to regular schools in condition that they do not have cognitive problems as to join in the curriculum in the mainstream schools. In 1986, the government carried out this kind of a project named integration program. It seems that this kind of integration program was then becoming the core system to be developed into an inclusive education system.

In 1998, the Indonesian government extended MoU with Norwegian government represented by Braillo Foundation focusing on the building capacity to enhance the development of inclusive education. The most important program of this foundation was empowering the national resource centers to facilitate the children with visual impairment mainstreamed the regular schools nearby. There are 8 resource centers located in Java, Bali, Sumatra, and Sulawesi provided with Braille printed books for students with visual impairment in the regular schools. The project ended up with a period of wide nation awareness campaign of education for all. In 2003, the Directorate General of basic and Secondary Education issued a Letter of intent No. 380/.C.C6/MN/2003 requiring that each District should open inclusive schools. This new paradigm has changed the mindset of the nation from segregation to inclusion.

Such awareness and commitments to the rights to education for children with special needs in inclusive education are from the confirmed in the monumental agreements resulted from Bandung and Bukit Tinggi Declarations. Bandung Declaration, 8 - 14 August 2004 entitled "Indonesia Moves on Towards Inclusive Education" granted two (7) items of decision. Three of the 7 decisions include the guarantee children with special needs to get education, humane treatment without discrimination, and freedom to interact with people in public places equipped with accessible facilities.

In the consecutive year, the Declaration of Bukittinggi was agreed in the International Symposium held on 26 - 29 September 2005 with the theme "The Removal of Barriers to Learning, Participation and Development". The main results are the declarations and strategies to achieve "education for all", respect differences, develop the management of inclusive education, create the environment that supports learning and life of children, promote the inclusive education services, and prepare an action plan to provide physical and non-physical accessibility.

Awareness campaigns went constantly. From 2006 upto 2010, more than 1000 regular schools decided themselves to inclusive schools. As time went on, the nation awareness becomes stronger. Within 3 year time, The Directorate of Special Education has facilitate provinces and regions to declare " the province or region of Inclusion" It is listed that in 2013, there are more than 2.100 regular schools state themselves an inclusive schools (Directorate of Special Education and Special Service Education, 2013). In term of quantity, the growing number of welcoming schools becomes an ideal vision. On the other

side, the quality of education service for children included in the mainstream becomes questionable.

The Act on Inclusive Education

To be specific, the rule governing the implementation of inclusive education is mandated in the Ministry of Education Act number 70/2009 on Inclusive Education. This internal strength of law on inclusive education is imposed by a **policy of the Government Rule No. 70 Year 2009**. This policy recommends that Regional Authority "organize and develop an inclusive education in every sub-district area. Article (1) in this Act explicitly states that **inclusive education is an education system that enhances the same opportunities for all children with disabilities and those with potentially excellent intelligences to learn in mainstream schools together with other children in general**. **It means there is no space for any schools to reject children with disabilities to learn equally and get educational service in the respective schools without discrimination**. In a different Article (4), the Act requires that the local government appoint each *sub-district to open at least one school in the elementary and secondary level to be welcoming schools for children with disabilities*. This issuance of the Act on Inclusive Education has precluded the spirit of the school community to accept children in their schools without discrimination. Since then, the growing awareness of community on the inclusive education becomes stronger.

The Inhibiting Factors to Inclusive Education

In spite of the fact that the government program of 9 year-compulsory of education is encouraged and campaigned through EFA, quite a few of regular schools reject the idea of inclusive education. People just do not want children with disabilities to study in regular schools. They are fed up with the *cultural mindset* that no other choice for children with special needs to go except to special schools. They just believe special school is the best place for them to study. Many others assume many students with disabilities in special schools will move to regular schools. The teachers in these special schools would not have any job when the neighboring regular school is opened for children with disabilities.

In addition, people think that children with disabilities would never achieve in regular schools. *The competitive system of education* has closed the door for children with special needs. The teachers would never have extra time to work with slow learning students, let

alone the children with disabilities. Some are worried their schools become less favourite because the rank will decrease due to the poor achievement among children with special needs in their schools.

The growing number of inclusive schools, none the less, does not mean the growing quality of education. Two researches were conducted by a peer group of *Research Center of Diffabilities Studies Sebelas Maret University* as to evaluate the performance of inclusive education. One research was carried out in 2010 entitled '*The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia*' (Sunardi,et al. 2010). The research was conducted to 186 inclusive schools all over Indonesia. It found that the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia was not satisfactory (61%) of the national expectation (80%). The reason was the lack of human resource that many jobs related to special services could not be performed as expected.

Another research '*The Instructional Strategy of Inclusive Education through Cluster Model*' was also conducted to see the teachers' performances in inclusive classes (Gunarhadi, 2012). The preliminary study showed that in 91 inclusive schools, there were only two part time Special Teachers (0,02%) Special Teachers functioning as aid techers. From these two researches, the **most common problems of inclusive schools** are listed in the following points:

1. Limited human resources in terms of quantity and quality
2. The unavailability of modified curriculum for children with special needs
3. Inaccurate identification and assessment for children with special needs
4. Lack of teachers' competence in special education
5. Poor implementation of Individualized Educational Program
6. Difficult Classroom Management for diverse students.
7. Lack of parents' involvement in the childrens' progress of lerning
8. Lack of facilities and specific learning equipments for children with impairments

The Role of Universities in Promoting EFA

To support the national program of inclusive education in Indonesia, the involvement of universities is indicated in many ways of participation. Universities become agents of innovation. Researches and publication on children with disabilities are carried out to solve the specific problems in the points of view of education equity, psychological traits, and

social welfare. Universities also function as the government partner in designing, executing, as well as disseminating the concept and implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. One important thing to be noted, universities share, link, and adjust the international vision of EFA promulgated by UNESCO to the national as well local internalization of inclusive education.

To be specific, **the role of universities** can be described in the following points of activities:

1. Providing pre-service training of human resource in inclusive education. Inclusive education is compulsory in universities with special education departments. Students majoring in teacher education should take the subject of inclusive education to prepare the teaching skills for children in mainstream schools.
2. Providing in-service training of human resource for inclusive education. Since inclusive education is a relatively new trend in special education, teachers in regular schools need training on the classroom management in the mainstream schools
3. Providing advocacy for schools implementing inclusive education. The rapid growth of inclusive education occurs in term of quantity. It means it is the responsibility of university to main the quality of educational services in the mainstream schools.
4. Conducting researches and development on special education. For the inclusive education to develop, research centers in universities perform researches and developments that result in education reform and innovation.
5. Publishing books and articles on inclusive education. In addition to training on inclusive education, teachers and other practitioners learn from books and articles written by lecturers and peer groups the research centers in universities.
6. Providing a quota for Students with special needs for university admission. To study in university is the right for every high school graduate. Hence, it is worth providing special facilitation of university admission for students with special needs.
7. Presentation of inclusive awards for achievement in promoting inclusive education. Awards are presented to universities for their best contribution to the acceleration of school participation rate through EFA.

Sebelas Maret University, as one the universities with Special Education Department and Center of Diffability studies has done to the extent as indicated above. Such an

actualization, admittedly, is the beginning point of dream towards the long term goal of EFA vision in Indonesia.

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