

INDONESIA

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**The Current Situation and Future Trends of
Educational Practice for Children with
Visual Impairments
Practice and Its Outcome of Educational
Support in Indonesia**

Nowadays in Indonesia there are 945 special schools for children with special needs that consist of 8,911 classrooms in total with 41,015 children with special needs in total. From the 41,015 children, there were 2,945 children with visual impairments ($\pm 13\%$ from the population of children with special needs) that were spread out in the level of pre-primary=250, primary school=1,712, junior secondary=536, senior secondary=125, and integrated schools=321. Further more, in 1995, from the total population of visual impairments some of them have succeeded in taking national examination. In the country, national examination can be used as a national standard of school leaver. Students who have passed the examination may go to regular schools and finally do S1 (sarjana) degree in an institute or university as some of them have done it.

The national examination is held yearly by the end of primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary levels. Students who have passed the national examination will get certificates that can be used to continue their education to regular schools. For instances in 1995 student with visual impairments who took the national exam were 88 students of primary level, 50 students of junior secondary, and 35 students of senior secondary. Usually, students with visual impairments who have succeeded to take the national exam would prefer to continue their education to regular schools that might provide a better educational services.

From the data available, it can also be described that teacher's ratio was 1:3 and classroom's ratio was 1:4. It means that every teacher handle 3 students in his/her school, and in every single classroom was occupied by 4 children of visual impairments. From the data it could be inferred that on the one hand, the government of Indonesia and the society have paid more attention to the development of special education for visual impairments by establishing building of special school with the adequate number of classrooms. In addition, the government has recruited enough number of teachers for the special schools. But, on the other hand, we might be surprised by the lower of enrollment rate (3.7%) for visual impairments (enrollment rate for schools age in Indonesia has reached more than 95%). The question is why the enrollment rate for visual impairment is so lower?

From researches it can be known that the lower of enrollment rate for visual impairments are many, among of them: (1) most special schools are situated in big towns, so that parents who live in the rural and remote areas were reluctant to send their children to the schools. (2) the existing schools for children with visual impairments are mostly special schools. In fact, many children

with visual impairments were not interested to go to the special schools.

Special schools in the country generally use regular schools curriculum by modifying them in some parts to suit the characteristic and needs of children with visual impairments . This policy has been taken due to some reasons. Firstly , in principles there are no different between the needs of both visual impairments and other children. Therefore, they are all necessary to learn and to be taught the same curriculum. In other words children with visual impairments learn the same teaching-learning material as other children do. It is because children with visual impairments will live and work later in the society. Secondly, by learning the same curriculum, children with visual impairments will have the some learning and life competencies as others. Subsequently, student with visual impairment are capable to compete with other and could live independently like other member society. Based on this children with visual impairments of special schools are given opportunity to take part in the national examination.

Further more, in 1980-1984 the Department of Education initiated a pilot project of integrated schools for children with visual impairments. Up to now, the pilot project was not developed as it should be. In fact, the purpose of the project was to motivate other region/schools to take part in providing integrated education services for visual impairment. Hopefully by developing the integrated schools enrollment rate would be increasing significantly.

This pilot project was conducted by selecting the existing primary schools. For the purpose of the project, certain primary schools who has had good teaching-learning facilities and good in their performance were selected. Each integrated school will be provided with special room/space and a special teacher to assist children with visual impairments learning in the schools. The special teachers undergo their main tasks in the special room. So the children with visual impairments could follow teaching-learning process in the schools. It would bring about children with visual impairments could be able to compete with other students in the regular schools.

In fact, the integrated educational services has been supported by 1989 Educational Law of article 3.5.6 that every citizen has the equal right to gain educational services and equal opportunity to go through the existing educational services to obtain knowledge, competencies, and skills to fulfill the demand of basic education's policy of the country. As a consequence of the 1989 Educational Law some provinces determined a policy of certain regular schools to accept children with special needs(including visual impairments) and to have the same right and responsibilities as normal children do in the schools.

Nowadays, most children with visual impairments go to the existing special schools. However, some of them who are bright tend to continue their education to regular schools after their completion of primary school level. Some students with visual impairments have succeeded to do their education up to higher education. Some of them have got certificates of sarjana(51) degree in the field of education, law, political science, etc. Few mouths ago, a student with visual impairment has completed his doctorate degree in the field of language teaching from the University of Education Indonesia. At present he works as the head teacher of feeding school for children with visual impairments. Some others after their completion of university level, mostly worked as teachers(civil servants) in the existing special schools for visual impairments. And the rests who

have completed from special senior secondary education worked as masseuer and musicians.

Developing a model of inclusive school

Recently, Indonesia has experienced a dramatic change of political climate and the demand of freedom of the people to express their opinion. In line with those changes, educational services for children with special needs has now been facing a challenge to reconstruct a new educational law that could more guarantee that all children with special needs have equal opportunity to enter the existing schools for both special schools and regular schools nearby. Up to now children with special needs have less access to undergo their education since regular schools around them have not accommodated them.

Unlike years ago, now the Indonesian government has paid more attention to the private schools by providing an extra honorarium to non-civil servant teachers and providing a subsidized finance for supporting daily activities of the schools. So in the future there will be no more different between private and public schools in terms of their performance. This condition will attract parents and their children with visual impairments to go to the existing schools nearby. It will later increase the enrollment rate of children with visual impairments. In other words in the future the government's policy is to increase the enrollment rate of children with visual impairments by provision of inclusive schools. It will end up with contribution to the success of compulsory education for basic education program in Indonesia.

In principles, the special education system in Indonesia should have a high adaptability. It is because the special education system is expected to provide educational services for all types of impairments through various forms of educational services i.e. special schools, integrated schools, regular schools, and inclusive schools. Therefore, in the near future, the Department of National Education will pioneer twelve centers of inclusive schools spread out through some provinces in the country. The inclusive schools are expected to accommodate children with special needs and other children to learn the same curriculum together and to have the same right and responsibilities. In the inclusive schools handicapped children (include visual impairments) are given the opportunity to study together with normal children at regular schools. Within inclusive schools children with special needs will develop their hidden potentialities and regard themselves as complete human beings. By the provision of inclusive schools, enrollment rate of children with special needs(including visual impairments) would be increasing as they have access to attend regular schools nearby. Through this provision, the Department of Education will be no need only a small additional fund as inclusive schools cost much cheaper than that of special school provision. The Department will provide teachers and special room for each inclusive school.