

INDONESIA

Mr. Mudjito

**Director of Special Education,
Directorate-General of Primary and Secondary Education,
Ministry of National Education**

Abstract

This Country Report described, in general, the conditions of special education in Indonesia, including the establishment of special schools, the establishment of a formal office that manages and coordinates special education, the efforts that have been undertaken to improve the quality of special education, the efforts that are being implemented, future plans to further improve the quality of special education.

The first special school in Indonesia was the school for children with visual impairment in Bandung, West Java, established in 1901. In 1927 another special school was established, catering for the educational need of children with developmental disabilities (mental retardation). Three years later, in 1930 a special school for children with hearing impairment was also established in Bandung. Later, other special schools for children with special need education were established since the independence of Indonesia in 1945.

Besides the schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education, the Office of the Ministry for Social Affairs has some training centers for the training of people with special needs. Vocational skills are also provided at those centers to give them the opportunity to become independent and be able to earn for their living.

In 1965 a section of Special Education was established under the Ministry of Education. Later, in 1975 this section was expanded into a Sub-directorate of Special Education under the Directorate of Primary Education and in 2000 it was further expanded into a Directorate of Special Education under Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education.

Special education was provided at the primary and secondary education level and is part of the national education system in Indonesia. Students with disabilities can enjoy education at (1) Sekolah Dasar Luar Biasa (SDLB = Special Primary School), (2) Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB = Special School consisting of kindergarten, primary school, junior secondary school and senior secondary school under one premise), (3) an integrated school, and (4) an inclusive school. An integrated or inclusive school is a regular school in which students with special needs are learning together with children without special needs.

Now there are 39 public special schools and about 1,000 private schools. Private schools are either established and run by foundations or individuals and vary in condition from very good to very poor. There are 49,483 students with varying disabilities in the special schools and many of them come from middle or low-income families. Many children with special needs education do not receive education at a school. The reasons include that (a) they are not accepted at a regular school, (b) there is no special school available in the vicinity, (c) the parents cannot afford to send their children to a special school, or (d) the parents are unaware that there are special schools.

The history of the Directorate of Special Education was introduced. The divisions or Sub-directorates of the Directorate and their subsequent functions were described. The responsibilities of the Directorate included (1) developing policy for special education; (2) planning and programming the development of special education; (3) developing a management system for special education; (4) standardizing curriculum and evaluation system for special education ; (5) developing and standardizing special education facilities; (6) monitoring and evaluating development programs for special education.

Problems and issues that were discovered from an evaluation included (1) the numbers of special schools are not enough to cater for the needs of children with special needs, (2) the special schools are located in major cities of each district and are not accessible to children living in the rural areas, (3) the quality of education provided by the special schools needs to be improved, (4) many of the existing special schools do not have adequate facilities, and (5) for many of the parents, having a child with disability is an embarrassment and they do not want to send the child to school

The current activities of the Directorate consist of the development of curriculum and books, improvement of facilities, block-grant provision, scholarships for students, the training of teachers, school management training, vocational skills, and education services for drug abused children were described.

In addition, the Directorate is also responsible for the development of education services for children who are gifted and talented. This is part of the fulfillment of the rights of these students. Now the Government is piloting several schools as schools that provides this type of education to those students. The form of the piloted program is acceleration in which students could finish their schooling one year earlier.

Within the spirit of providing “the least restrictive” environment to students with disabilities within a school, the Government is piloting an inclusive education program in several schools in several provinces. In these schools, and depending on the level of severity of disability, students with disabilities learn together with their peers without disabilities within a regular classroom. The benefit for students with disabilities is that they learn to lead their life in a more natural

environment and that it will be easier for them after they graduate. To succeed the program, school managers and teachers of the pilot schools are provided training in the area of inclusive education.

Continuous improvement of special education is carried out with own resources as well as foreign assistance. In the latter context, the Government of Norway provides assistance to the Government of Indonesia in the area of special education. One of the activities under this scheme is the establishment of 7 Braille Resource Centers. These centers are equipped with Braille machines for the printing of Braille books for students with visual impairment in each region. For example, the Center in Jakarta will serve the special schools in four provinces, namely Jakarta, Lampung, West Kalimantan and Central Kalimantan. The teachers of the centers have been trained to use the Braille machines to convert Latin script to Braille, so that students with visual impairment can access knowledge and technology from the Braille books.

Teachers and staff from the Directorate of Special Education were sent to Norway to study at the Oslo University to obtain their Masters' degree in Special Education. They will now be able to contribute to the development of Special Education in Indonesia.

A Skill Training Center is going to be established in Jakarta to provide training for graduates of the Special Schools. The program consists of 6 months basic training in the Center and 6 months on-the-job training in industry. Graduates will be given a certificate of competence when they pass the skill test at the end of the program. This program will help the graduates to find better employment according to the competencies they have mastered.

Within the Directorate of Special Education a Management Information System (MIS) will be established next year. This System will become the main partner of the Directorate's functions of collecting, analyzing, evaluating, and planning of data on special education. Under this System, data on the number of students with special education needs, the types of disability or impairment or difficulty, dispersion of students, a student's age, gender and level of education, the type of support a student needs, the number of teachers, etc. will be collected, analyzed, and evaluated. The result of those processes will become the basis for planning the improvement of special education and the welfare of students with special needs.

Within the establishment of MIS, an information and communication technology (ICT) will be included. Although our intention of formally establishing an ICT in special education development involves electronic tools and machines, our scope of ICT is much broader to include chalkboards, papyrus scrolls, stone tablets, carve drawings, wooden or bamboo tools, etc. (Brown, 1997). We have been implementing this definition of ICT in our schools, to augment a student's strengths and compensate for the effects of disabilities.

Technology is coming to help us in special education, which I specifically will refer to assistive technology. The purpose of assistive technology is “to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities” (US Department of Education, 2000).

Thus, the emphasis is on creating student-technology partnerships for learning. Today, an audible English-Indonesian and Indonesian-English dictionary is on the market, a product helpful to people with visual impairment. Also, English-Indonesian and Indonesian-English dictionary computer software is in the market. This software is very helpful to people with hearing impairment and other people without hearing impairment. Starting next year, the Directorate will assess a feasibility study on the modification of speech-to-text and text-to-speech computer softwares, which are available in the market in the English language. It is envisaged that these softwares will remove or significantly reduce barrier to learning and participation in life.