

Analysis of the Role of Class Teachers in Accompanying Slow Learner Students with the Emotional Quotient (EQ) Approach

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Abstract

Inclusive education demands a strategic role for classroom teachers in assisting students with special learning needs. This study to comprehensively examine how classroom teachers support slow learner students through an Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach in an inclusive education setting. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design involving five slow learner students. Data collection techniques included classroom observations. This study involved in-depth interviews with a total of 7 classroom teachers, and learning documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and thematic drawing of conclusions. The results indicate that classroom teachers act as academic facilitators, emotional mediators, and builders of positive relationships with students. The EQ approach is implemented through emotion recognition, emotion regulation, positive reinforcement, empathy, and supportive interpersonal communication. EQ-based mentoring has been shown to help reduce anxiety, increase learning motivation, and improve slow learner student participation in classroom learning. The study concludes that integrating the EQ approach into teacher mentoring effectively optimizes inclusive education for slow learners.

Keywords: *Emotional Quotient, inclusive education, learning assistance, slow learner*

Abstrak

Pendidikan inklusif menuntut peran strategis bagi guru kelas dalam membantu siswa dengan kebutuhan belajar khusus. Studi ini bertujuan untuk secara komprehensif meneliti bagaimana guru kelas mendukung siswa yang lambat belajar melalui pendekatan Kecerdasan Emosional (EQ) dalam lingkungan pendidikan inklusif. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus yang melibatkan lima siswa yang lambat belajar. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi kelas. Studi ini melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan total 7 guru kelas, dan dokumentasi pembelajaran. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, presentasi data, dan penarikan kesimpulan tematik. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa guru kelas bertindak sebagai fasilitator akademis, mediator emosional, dan pembangun hubungan positif dengan siswa. Pendekatan EQ diimplementasikan melalui pengenalan emosi, pengaturan emosi, penguatan positif, empati, dan komunikasi interpersonal yang suportif. Pendampingan berbasis EQ telah terbukti membantu mengurangi kecemasan, meningkatkan motivasi belajar, dan meningkatkan partisipasi siswa yang lambat belajar dalam pembelajaran di kelas. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi pendekatan EQ dalam pendampingan guru efektif untuk mengoptimalkan layanan pendidikan inklusif bagi slow learner.

Kata kunci: Kecerdasan Emosional, pendidikan inklusif, bantuan belajar, siswa lambat belajar.



INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right of every citizen that must be fulfilled without discrimination, including for students with special learning needs such as slow learners. This principle is strictly regulated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that every citizen has the right to obtain a quality education in accordance with their potential and needs. Furthermore, inclusive education policy in Indonesia is reinforced through Ministry of National Education Regulation Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education. This regulation asserts that educational units are obligated to provide the widest possible opportunities for students with disabilities and/or those with potential intelligence and special talents to participate in education alongside students in general (Nabiela & Ulfatin, 2023; Amnesti et al., 2023). These regulations position elementary schools as the front line in realizing educational services that are adaptive, fair, and oriented toward the individual needs of students, including slow learners studying in regular classrooms.

Globally, the commitment to inclusive education is also a major agenda in the international education world. UNESCO emphasizes that inclusive education is a systematic process to increase the participation and learning outcomes of all students by removing barriers to learning and adjusting the educational environment to accommodate student diversity. This commitment is reflected in the Education 2030 Framework for Action and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasize the importance of inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. Within this framework, teachers are positioned as key actors who are not only responsible for the transmission of knowledge but also for fostering a learning environment that supports the emotional and social well-being of all students. However, in practice, the implementation of inclusive education still faces various challenges, such as limited resources, lack of teacher training, and insufficient institutional support (Isnawati et al., 2025; Hanur et al., 2025).

These conditions indicate that inclusive education is not merely about placing students with special learning needs in regular classrooms, but demands adjustments in learning strategies and sustainable mentoring. One group of learners requiring special attention in this context is slow learner students—those who have a slower learning ability compared to their peers, thus requiring more time, repetition, and a more individualized learning approach. Various studies show that slow learners often experience academic difficulties accompanied by emotional issues, such as low self-confidence, learning anxiety, and a tendency to feel frustrated when facing the demands of learning in a regular classroom (Khiyarusoleh, 2019; Nurfadhillah et al., 2021; Muhtarom & Cahyani, 2023). Therefore, the success of inclusive education relies heavily on the classroom teacher's ability to understand the characteristics of slow learner students and provide mentoring that is oriented not only toward cognitive achievement but also toward strengthening the students' emotional and social aspects.

Slow learner students are learners who possess intellectual abilities slightly below average, causing obstacles in understanding learning materials at the same speed as their peers. They require longer time, repetition, and a more personal and emotional learning approach to achieve learning goals optimally (Khiyarusoleh, 2019; Ridha, 2022). In practice, slow learner students frequently face various learning difficulties, such as being slow to grasp concepts, being prone to forgetting, lacking self-confidence, and experiencing difficulty in emotional regulation when facing academic demands (Nurfadhillah et al., 2021; Muhtarom & Cahyani, 2023).

These conditions were also found at SDN 1 Banyakprodo, an elementary school that implements inclusive learning with the presence of five slow learner students in

regular classes. Based on initial observations, these students exhibited general characteristics of slow learners, such as high dependency on teacher direction, difficulty following the classroom learning rhythm, and a tendency to withdraw or display negative emotions when they feel they have failed or are lagging behind. This situation demands the role of a classroom teacher who does not only focus on cognitive aspects but is also capable of managing the students' emotional aspects in the daily learning process

In the context of inclusive education, the classroom teacher holds a central role as the primary mentor for slow learner students in the classroom. Unlike the presence of Special Assistant Teachers or shadow teachers, who are not always available in every school, classroom teachers are the main actors who interact directly with students during teaching and learning activities. Various studies indicate that the success of mentoring slow learner students is highly influenced by the classroom teacher's competence in understanding student characteristics, designing adaptive learning, and building positive emotional relationships (Handayani & Martaningsih, 2022; Misky et al., 2021; Fadiyah et al., 2024).

However, in practice, classroom teachers often face various obstacles in mentoring slow learner students. These constraints include limited time, large class sizes, curriculum demands, and a lack of specialized training regarding the management of slow learner students (Fitriana, S. N., 2023; Prahastiwi et al., 2025). As a result, the mentoring provided still tends to focus solely on academic aspects, such as giving additional assignments or repeating materials, without being balanced by attention to the student's emotional condition.

In fact, the emotional aspect plays a vital role in the learning success of slow learner students. A student's inability to manage emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and low motivation often becomes the main barrier in the learning process. Therefore, the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach becomes a relevant method to be implemented in mentoring slow learner students in regular classrooms. EQ refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions, as well as to establish positive social relationships with others (Hasmara, 2022; Sofyani & Susanto, 2019).

A number of studies emphasize that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to the learning success, motivation, and social adjustment of students in elementary schools (Nasryah & Rahman, 2019; Taufik & Ashari, 2025). In the context of slow learner students, an EQ approach can help students develop self-awareness, reduce learning anxiety, increase self-confidence, and improve social interactions with teachers and peers. Research by Amelia et al. (2023) specifically shows that emotional intelligence training conducted by teachers is able to improve the learning readiness and positive responses of slow learner students in elementary schools.

In addition, emotional support from teachers has also been proven to play a vital role in increasing the learning interest and persistence of slow learner students. This support can be manifested through empathetic communication, providing positive reinforcement, and creating a safe and inclusive classroom atmosphere (Julianti et al., 2023; Ummah, 2024). Teachers who are able to integrate the EQ approach into learning assistance not only help students understand the material but also foster a sense of being valued and accepted within the school environment.

Nevertheless, empirical studies specifically discussing the role of classroom teachers in assisting slow learner students through an EQ approach are still relatively limited. Most research highlights the role of shadow teachers or special assistant teachers (Afifah et al., 2025; Amalia & Harsiwi, 2024; Mardiyah & Masithah, 2025), while the role of the classroom teacher as the primary actor in regular classes has not been extensively studied in depth, especially in the context of integrating emotional and academic aspects. This indicates a research gap that needs to be filled, particularly in public elementary schools with limited specialized assistance resources.

Based on these conditions, this study is essential to conduct in order to analyze in depth the role of classroom teachers in assisting slow learner students using the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach at SDN 1 Banyakprodo. This analysis is expected to provide a clear picture of the assistance strategies employed by teachers, the forms of EQ application in learning, and its impact on the emotional response and learning process of the five slow learner students at the school.

Based on the background description, this research is directed to comprehensively examine the role of classroom teachers in assisting slow learner students at SDN 1 Banyakprodo using the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach. The focus of this study includes how classroom teachers carry out their roles in the process of assisting slow learner students, how the EQ approach is applied in daily learning practices, and the factors that support or hinder the implementation of such assistance. In line with this focus, the purpose of this study is to describe the role of classroom teachers in assisting slow learner students at SDN 1 Banyakprodo, analyze the application of the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach in learning assistance for slow learner students, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of EQ-based assistance by classroom teachers. Thus, this research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of inclusive education studies, particularly regarding the integration of emotional approaches in assisting slow learner students, as well as a practical contribution for teachers and schools in improving the quality of inclusive, humanistic learning services oriented toward the needs of the students.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative study using a case study approach aimed at deeply understanding the role of the classroom teacher as a Special Assistant Teacher (GPK) in assisting slow learner students through the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach at Public Elementary School (SDN) 1 Banyakprodo. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to explore in depth the meanings, processes, and dynamics of assistance that occur naturally within the school environment. This approach allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interactions, experiences, and perspectives of classroom teachers in assisting slow learner students within an inclusive setting. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in collecting and analyzing data, enabling flexibility in capturing rich, contextual, and holistic information through techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis (Chand, 2025; Luna-Reyes & Andersen, 2003; Saldaña, 2011). Therefore, this approach is considered appropriate to reveal the complexity of educational practices that cannot be measured solely through quantitative methods.

The research was conducted at SDN 1 Banyakprodo, located in Tirtomoyo District, Wonogiri Regency. This school was selected because it has begun developing inclusive education services by utilizing classroom teachers as GPKs for students with special needs, including slow learners. The primary considerations for selecting this research location included the heterogeneous learning environment, relatively strong rural social support, and school policies open to mentoring innovations. The research was carried out over one year through several stages, including initial observation, implementation of the EQ approach in learning, data analysis, and the preparation of the research report.

The research subjects were five students classified as slow learners based on initial observations in the inclusive classroom. These students exhibited characteristics such as slow information processing speed, difficulty understanding abstract concepts, limited memory, susceptibility to mental fatigue, low learning motivation, and a tendency toward low self-confidence. Additionally, the students experienced obstacles in social interaction and group work, necessitating assistance that focuses not only on academic

aspects but also encompasses emotional and social aspects. These conditions reinforce the importance of the classroom teacher's role as a GPK in providing continuous EQ-based mentoring.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation of the learning and mentoring process, as well as in-depth interviews with the participants in this study included seven classroom teachers serving as GPK, one school principal, the parents or guardians of five slow learner students, and five slow learner students. Secondary data was obtained from supporting documents, such as school profiles, inclusive education policies, learning tools, student progress records, assessment results, and documentation of mentoring activities. The use of both types of data aims to obtain a comprehensive picture and strengthen the validity of the research findings.

Data collection techniques used include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Non-participatory observations were conducted to observe EQ-based mentoring strategies, teacher-student interactions, as well as the students' emotional and social responses. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a child-friendly approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of the informants. Documentation was used to supplement and verify the data obtained from observations and interviews.

Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checks. Data analysis was performed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive analysis model, which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions continuously until credible and scientifically accountable findings were obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study indicate that classroom teachers, who also serve as Special Assistant Teachers (GPK), play a central role in assisting slow learner students in regular classrooms. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering academic content but also act as facilitators, mentors, and emotional supporters throughout the learning process. Based on observations, teachers consistently provided clear and gradual instructions, adapted learning strategies to meet students' needs, and offered individualized assistance. In addition, teachers actively built positive emotional relationships with students through empathetic communication, motivation, and positive reinforcement. These findings demonstrate that the role of the teacher extends beyond cognitive instruction to include emotional and social support for students.

The implementation of the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach was reflected in various teaching strategies applied by the classroom teachers. Key indicators observed included clarity of instructions, the use of multisensory strategies, emotional reinforcement, and the application of scaffolding and fading techniques. The quantitative data showed that emotional reinforcement achieved the highest average score (3.8), followed by clarity of instructions (3.6), scaffolding and fading (3.5), and multisensory strategies (3.4). Meanwhile, student emotional responses (3.3), learning activity and motivation (3.4), and social interaction among students (3.1) were also categorized as good, although social interaction obtained the lowest score. These findings suggest that while EQ-based strategies have been effectively implemented, social development requires more sustained and intensive support compared to academic and emotional aspects.

Furthermore, the comparison of student conditions before and after the implementation of EQ-based mentoring revealed positive changes across all observed aspects. Emotional stability improved from low–fair to good, learning motivation increased from low to good, classroom activity shifted from passive to active, and learning independence developed from low to fair–good levels. Social interaction,

although initially limited, began to develop gradually. These improvements indicate that the EQ approach plays a significant role in enhancing the learning readiness and overall engagement of slow learner students.

In addition, the findings show variations in how students responded to EQ-based mentoring. Some students demonstrated significant improvement in emotional regulation, as indicated by reduced negative emotional reactions and an increased ability to seek help verbally. Others showed increased participation in classroom activities, such as answering questions and completing tasks, although their learning pace remained relatively slow. In terms of social interaction, several students began to engage more actively with their peers, particularly in group activities, even if their roles were still simple. Increased learning motivation was also reflected in greater persistence and reduced avoidance behavior when facing challenging tasks. Moreover, the development of learning independence was observed through the application of scaffolding and fading strategies, although some students still required consistent emotional reinforcement.

Finally, this study also identified several supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of EQ-based assistance. Supporting factors included teachers' empathy and commitment, the use of adaptive and flexible teaching strategies, and the creation of a positive and inclusive classroom environment. On the other hand, inhibiting factors included limited instructional time, large class sizes, and the diverse characteristics of students, which required individualized approaches. The absence of specialized support personnel in certain situations also increased the responsibility of classroom teachers. These findings suggest that although EQ-based mentoring is effective, its successful implementation requires continuous support, adequate resources, and ongoing professional development for teachers.

Discussion

The findings of this study, in line with the research objectives, indicate that classroom teachers play a significant role in assisting slow learner students through the implementation of the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach, as well as in managing various supporting and inhibiting factors within the learning process. The results show that mentoring conducted by classroom teachers acting as Special Assistant Teachers (GPK) using the EQ approach has a positive impact on the academic, emotional, and social aspects of slow learner students. This finding reinforces the theoretical view that slow learners require not only academic adaptation but also consistent emotional support to engage optimally in the learning process (Ridha, 2022; Jamiilah et al., 2025; Nasryah & Rahman, 2019; Taufik & Ashari, 2025). The EQ approach in this study proved to be an important foundation in creating emotional safety, increasing learning motivation, and supporting students' social development.

From the perspective of emotional intelligence theory, these findings align with Parker et al. (2011) and Hasmarra (2022), who state that the ability to recognize and manage emotions contributes to students' learning readiness and academic performance. Emotional reinforcement provided by the classroom teacher as a GPK—such as empathy, emotional validation, and appropriate praise—proved helpful in helping slow learner students reduce learning anxiety and increase the courage to try. This strengthens the findings of Nasryah and Rahman (2019) as well as Zaenudin and Nugraha (2025), which assert that EQ development has a positive relationship with the motivation and learning persistence of elementary school students.

Regarding learning strategies, the results of this study show that clarity of instruction, the use of multisensory strategies, and the application of scaffolding and fading are essential elements in assisting slow learner students. These findings are consistent with Misky et al. (2021) and Handayani and Martaningsih (2022), who emphasize that systematic and adaptive learning structures are a primary need for slow learners. Additionally, the use of multisensory strategies supports the views of Sumiati

and Gumiandari (2022) and Fitriana et al. (2024) that variations in learning modalities help slow learner students understand abstract concepts and maintain learning focus.

Compared to similar research, the results of this study show similarities with studies by Fadiyah et al. (2024) and Kurniasari et al. (2025), which conclude that the role of the classroom teacher is crucial in determining the success of handling learning difficulties for slow learners in elementary schools. The main similarity lies in the emphasis on the teacher's role as a facilitator, mentor, and emotional reinforcer. However, this study differs because it explicitly positions the EQ approach as the primary framework for assistance, rather than merely an additional part of the learning strategy.

Research by Ezra and Latifah (2025) and Puspita and Harsiwi (2024) highlights the teacher's role in facing students with special needs with a focus on learning adjustments and classroom management. Meanwhile, this study expands on those findings by showing that the success of assistance is determined not only by adjusting learning methods but also by the quality of emotional interaction between teacher and student. In other words, the EQ approach serves as a bridge that links the academic and emotional needs of slow learner students.

Socially, the results of this study are in line with the findings of Julianti et al. (2023) and Ummah (2024), which affirm that teacher support and an inclusive classroom environment play an important role in enhancing the social interactions of slow learner students. However, this study also found that the development of social aspects tends to occur more slowly than emotional aspects and learning motivation. This finding reinforces the results of Muhtarom and Cahyani (2023) and Nurfadhillah et al. (2021), stating that the social barriers of slow learners are often complex and influenced by previous learning experiences and peer dynamics.

In the context of differentiated learning, the results of this study align with Handayani et al. (2024) and Prahastiwi et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of adjusting learning strategies based on individual student needs. However, this study adds an emotional dimension as the basis for learning differentiation, so the approach used is oriented not only toward content and process but also toward the student's emotional state during learning.

Regarding strengths, this study has power in the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive overview of the impact of EQ-based assistance. Furthermore, the focus on classroom teachers as GPKs provides a practical contribution for elementary schools with limited specialized mentoring resources, as also highlighted by Fitriana (2023) and Mardiyah and Masithah (2025). This research also highlights the EQ approach as a realistic and contextual strategy in inclusive education.

Nonetheless, this study also has several limitations. The limited number of research subjects and the research context, which was only conducted at one elementary school, mean that the generalization of research results must be done carefully. Additionally, the research duration, which focused on one mentoring period, does not yet fully reflect the long-term impact of the EQ approach on students' academic achievement, as suggested by Tran et al. (2020) and Prayoga (2025). Another limitation lies in the suboptimal external professional support, such as school psychologists, who could enrich the students' emotional assistance process.

Thus, this discussion confirms that the research results not only support previous theories and empirical findings but also enrich inclusive education studies by positioning the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach as a key element in assisting slow learner students. This research implies that the success of inclusive education is largely determined by the classroom teacher's ability to integrate adaptive learning strategies with continuous emotional support.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the classroom teacher, acting as a Special Assistant Teacher (GPK), plays a strategic role in assisting slow learner students through the Emotional Quotient (EQ) approach at Public Elementary School (SDN) 1 Banyakprodo. The assistance provided does not only focus on academic aspects but also significantly strengthens the students' emotional and social aspects. Observation results show that clarity of instruction, the use of multisensory strategies, emotional reinforcement, and the application of scaffolding and fading contribute positively to the emotional stability, learning motivation, activity, and social interaction of slow learner students. The EQ approach is proven to help students manage emotions, increase self-confidence, and build more positive relationships with teachers and peers. These findings reinforce that the integration of emotional aspects into mentoring is a vital component in the success of inclusive education, particularly in elementary schools with limited specialized assistance resources. However, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single school with a limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the study focused on short-term observations, so it has not fully captured the long-term impact of the EQ approach on students' academic and social development. Third, the data relied primarily on observation and interviews, which may be influenced by subjective interpretation. The implications of this research indicate the need to strengthen the competence of classroom teachers as GPKs through continuous training focused on EQ-based mentoring strategies. Recommendations for future research include expanding the subjects and research context, as well as examining the long-term impact of the EQ approach on the academic and social development of slow learner students across various educational units.

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