

The Role and Competence of Special Guidance Teachers in Inclusive Education: A Study in Surakarta City

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Abstract. Inclusive education aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, within regular school environments. The implementation of inclusive education necessitates the involvement of Special Guidance Teachers (SGT) to support students with special needs both academically and non-academically. However, in Surakarta City, challenges remain regarding the availability and competence of SGTs, particularly in inclusive schools that lack adequate specialized educators. This research seeks to analyze the optimization of the roles and responsibilities of SGTs, identify the impacts of their absence in inclusive schools, and explore the strategies employed by schools to address these issues. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and questionnaires involving school principals, SGTs, and classroom teachers. The findings suggest that SGTs often function similarly to regular classroom teachers, and in some cases, they also assume classroom teaching roles due to a shortage of educators. The absence of SGTs has led to insufficient provision of specialized learning programs for students with special needs, challenges for classroom teachers in adapting lessons, and limitations for schools in accommodating students with moderate to severe disabilities. To address these challenges, schools have appointed honorary SGTs and collaborated with Special Schools to bring in visiting teachers.

Keywords: children with special needs; inclusive education; inclusive school; special guidance teacher

INTRODUCTION

Rapid advancements in the era of globalization necessitate continuous improvement in educational quality. Education transcends mere knowledge transfer; it serves as a platform for cultivating both character and skills among learners (Kamali Arslantas et al., 2021). To achieve these objectives, various educational components must operate at optimal levels (Prabhu et al., 2023). A pivotal element in the success of education is the role of professional and competent teachers. Educators are not merely instructors; they also serve as facilitators, motivators, and guides in helping their students maximize their potential (How & Hung, 2019).

In Indonesia, teacher competency standards have been established under the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 16 of 2007, which mandates that every teacher must possess pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies as outlined in Article 28, Paragraph 3 of Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards. Additionally, Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes that professional competence includes a broad and deep mastery of learning materials, enabling teachers to guide students in achieving the set competency standards (Alifian et al., 2023). Adequate competence not only involves the development of innovative learning strategies and the utilization of technology but also the ability to design comprehensive assessments and conduct continuous evaluations to enhance the quality of education (Andriana et al., 2022). However, in the context of inclusive education, many teachers still face challenges in adapting learning strategies for Children with Special Needs (ABK), particularly in inclusive schools that lack sufficient training support for educators.

Although inclusive education in Indonesia shows positive prospects, challenges in implementing effective strategies remain a major obstacle (Sowiyah & Perdana, 2022; Kurniawati, 2021). Many teachers hold supportive attitudes toward inclusive education, but still lack confidence in applying appropriate methods for Children with Special Needs (ABK) (Sowiyah & Perdana, 2022). Therefore, the need for continuous professional development for teachers has been strongly emphasized in previous research (Rasmitadila et al., 2021). Several initiatives have been implemented to enhance inclusive education, including digital interventions and the adoption of international curricula (Zuhdi & Dobson, 2024). Additionally, collaboration between universities and schools is considered crucial in improving the quality of inclusive education. Studies in inclusive schools in East Java indicate that the level of inclusivity tends to be high, but community involvement in supporting inclusive education remains a challenge (Yasin et al., 2023). Furthermore, research reveals that teachers' epistemological beliefs significantly influence their attitudes toward inclusive education, suggesting that a paradigm shift in teaching practices is needed to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia (Sheehy et al., 2019). Meanwhile, efforts to provide inclusive education for students from indigenous communities still require further exploration, as research in this area remains limited (Andriana et al., 2022). Therefore, strengthening teacher competencies, continuous training, and inter-institutional collaboration are key elements in supporting more optimal educational inclusivity.

One strategic effort to achieve equitable education is through inclusive education, which provides opportunities for children with special needs to learn alongside their peers in regular school environments. This concept aims to reduce discrimination and enhance social interactions among students. The Minister of National Education, in Regulation No. 70 of 2009, emphasizes that inclusive education ensures equal access for all learners, including those with physical, intellectual, social, or emotional challenges. However, the success of inclusive education is heavily reliant on the preparedness of educators, particularly Special Guidance Teachers (SGTs), who bear the primary responsibility for supporting children with special needs.

The role of Special Guidance Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK) in inclusive education extends beyond merely accompanying Children with Special Needs (ABK) in the classroom; it also includes designing individualized learning programs, conducting assessments, and coordinating with various stakeholders, including classroom teachers and parents. The Specific Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education emphasize that GPKs must possess skills in conducting educational assessments and providing services tailored to the specific needs of ABK to ensure their optimal development (Sheehy et al., 2019). However, in practice, the challenges faced by GPKs remain quite complex, particularly in terms of competencies, resource availability, and role management within inclusive schools. These challenges highlight the need for enhanced training, adequate resources, and clearer role definitions to enable GPKs to effectively support the diverse needs of ABK and contribute to the success of inclusive education.

Research conducted by Yuwono and Okech (2021) indicates that Special Needs Education Teachers (SNETs) across various countries face similar challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, and the need to design curricula that cater to the diverse needs of students with special needs. Furthermore, the responsibilities of SNETs extend beyond teaching; they also involve collaboration with parents, coordination with general education teachers, and documentation of the progress of students with special needs (Khanna & Kareem, 2024). Additionally, the study by Irvan et al. (2024) emphasizes that the involvement of SNETs in inclusive education is generally lower compared to that in special schools, where a more systematic and specialized approach is implemented.

The essential competencies required of special education teachers (GPK) include screening, individual needs assessment, differentiated instruction, behavior management, and collaboration with various stakeholders (Majoko, 2019). However, many GPKs in inclusive schools come from a regular teaching background and lack training in special education, which hampers their ability to provide optimal services. Consequently, numerous students with moderate to severe disabilities are often directed to special schools (SLB) rather than receiving appropriate support in inclusive settings. To enhance the effectiveness of GPKs, research (Anaby et al., 2020) suggests the need for context-based professional support, ongoing education, and collaborative team opportunities. The implementation of a tiered support system also emerges as a crucial strategy that enables GPKs to share knowledge and resources across all levels of inclusive education (Sundqvist et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the roles and jurisdiction of GPKs within inclusive educational environments remain poorly defined, leading to frequent imbalances in their duties and responsibilities (Göransson et al., 2019). To address these challenges, it is imperative to focus on both physical and non-physical accessibility in learning to ensure better inclusivity for all students (Hermanto & Pamungkas, 2023).

Preliminary observations at SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS in Surakarta City reveal that the competency gap among Special Guidance Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK) remains a significant challenge in implementing inclusive education. Several GPKs still perform the roles of regular classroom teachers without specialized training in inclusive education, resulting in limited ability to adapt teaching methods to meet the needs of Children with Special Needs (ABK). This is reflected in the lack of curriculum modifications, limited development of Individual Learning Programs (Program Pembelajaran Individu/PPI), and low effectiveness of differentiated learning strategies. Additionally, the disproportionate number of GPKs relative to the number of ABK leads to a high workload for available educators, causing some ABK with moderate to severe disabilities to receive suboptimal services. This condition aligns with the findings of Mukminin et al. (2019), which state that inclusive education in Indonesia still requires curriculum reform to be more accommodating for all students, not only in terms of accessibility but also in the implementation of learning that is based on individual needs. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive training for GPKs, increased staffing, and a more flexible, needs-based curriculum to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Previous research indicates that while educators generally hold a positive perception of inclusive education (Sowiyah & Perdana, 2022), challenges persist in its implementation, particularly concerning curriculum and the adaptation of teaching methods (Sheehy et al., 2019). Furthermore, the disparities in inclusive education are not limited to students with disabilities; they also affect other marginalized groups, such as students from indigenous communities and those at risk of disasters (Sheehy et al., 2024). These findings underscore the urgent need for inclusive schools in Surakarta to enhance training for special education teachers, strengthen assessments based on individual needs, and improve curriculum modifications to ensure equitable access to education for all learners. This reform is also pertinent in an international context, where the integration of a global curriculum in religious-based schools raises debates about identity and social justice within inclusive education (Zuhdi & Dobson, 2022). Therefore, a more comprehensive approach to enhancing teacher capacity and reinforcing inclusive education policies is a strategic step toward addressing the existing gaps in educational services for students with special needs in inclusive settings.

The novelty of this research lies in its contextual and conceptual contribution to understanding the professional dynamics of Special Guidance Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK) within Indonesia's inclusive education system. While previous studies have explored general teacher competencies and inclusive education challenges, few have examined how institutional contexts shape the roles, collaborative patterns, and adaptive strategies of GPKs across different school environments. This study extends the existing literature by employing a descriptive qualitative approach using self-reported experiences to reveal both administrative and pedagogical challenges faced by GPKs and the mechanisms they employ to overcome these limitations. Furthermore, by comparing two inclusive schools with distinct institutional and cultural backgrounds, the research generates deeper insights into how contextual diversity

influences teacher collaboration with Special Schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa/SLB). The findings contribute theoretically by highlighting the contextualized nature of teacher competence and collaboration frameworks, and practically by offering evidence-based recommendations for policy and professional development to strengthen inclusive education practices in Indonesia.

Based on this background, the study aims to analyze the roles and competencies of GPKs, identify the challenges they face in delivering inclusive education services, explore strategies implemented by schools to address the limitations of GPKs, and formulate policy recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of GPKs in supporting inclusive education in elementary inclusive schools in Surakarta City.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the competencies of Special Guidance Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK) in inclusive elementary schools in Surakarta City. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to holistically understand phenomena in their natural context, aligning with the characteristics of qualitative research as explained by Sugiyono (2018), who states that qualitative research seeks to comprehend social realities in unmanipulated conditions, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument in data collection. In this study, the design used is descriptive self-report, where information is collected directly by the researcher through interaction with the research subjects (I Gunawan, 2013). The primary focus of this research is to analyze the roles, challenges, and strategies employed by GPKs in providing educational services for Children with Special Needs (ABK) in inclusive schools. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the complexities and nuances of inclusive education practices, offering valuable insights for improving the effectiveness of GPKs in supporting ABK.

This study was conducted in two inclusive schools located in Surakarta, namely SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS. The research subjects included Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) working in inclusive settings, regardless of whether they had a background in special education, regular classroom teachers who directly interacted with students with special needs (ABK) in inclusive classrooms, and school principals who are responsible for policies related to the implementation of inclusive education and the role of GPK within the school (Moleong, 2018).

For data collection, this research employed observation, interviews, and documentation (I Gunawan, 2013). The observations were conducted in an open manner, allowing the researcher to directly witness how GPK provided guidance to ABK during classroom learning as well as their activities outside the classroom, such as during breaks, playtime, or participation in extracurricular activities. Observations also aimed to assess the implementation of Individual Learning Programs (PPI) and the curriculum modification strategies employed by GPK, including the challenges they faced in supporting ABK's learning. In addition to observations, structured interviews were conducted, utilizing a pre-prepared interview guide (Moleong, 2018). The purpose of these interviews was to delve deeper into the roles and responsibilities of GPK in inclusive education, the obstacles encountered while assisting ABK, and the strategies implemented by the school to address the limitations of GPK personnel. The interview respondents included school principals, GPK, and regular classroom teachers. To complement data from observations and interviews, the documentation technique is also utilized in this research. The documentation collected includes learning plans for Children with Special Needs (ABK), records of ABK's progress during the learning process, as well as school policies related to inclusive education and the placement of Special Guidance Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK). Table 1 shows the instrument grid used in this research.

The data obtained from the three data collection techniques are analyzed using the interactive analysis model (Miles et al., 2016). This model consists of three main stages: data condensation, where data is selected, simplified, and categorized according to the research focus; data display, where information is organized into descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation; and conclusion drawing and verification, where patterns and relationships within the data are identified to produce valid findings. By employing this approach, the research can provide a deeper understanding of the competencies, challenges, and strategies that can be applied to enhance the quality of services provided by Special Guidance Teachers (Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK) in inclusive schools. This method ensures a systematic and rigorous analysis, enabling the generation of meaningful insights and actionable recommendations for improving inclusive education practices.

TABLE 1. Research instrument grid

Data Collection Techniques	Observed Aspects	Data source	Instruments
Observation	Role of GPK in inclusive classes	GPK, ABK students, class teachers	Observation sheet
	Social interactions of children with special needs at school	ABK students, class teachers, GPK	Observation sheet
	Implementation of Individual Learning Programs (PPI)	GPK, class teacher, principal	Observation sheet
	Obstacles faced in guidance	GPK, ABK students, class teachers	Observation sheet
Interview	GPK Competencies	GPK	Interview guide
	Role of GPK in inclusive education	GPK, class teacher, principal	Interview guide
	Obstacles in assisting children with special needs	GPK	Interview guide
	School strategies in improving the quality of inclusive services	Principal, GPK	Interview guide
Documentation	School policies related to inclusive education	Headmaster	Document checklist
	Learning programs for children with special needs	GPK, class teacher	Document checklist
	Data on the development of children with special needs	GPK, class teacher	Document checklist

RESULTS

This study aims to analyze the role and competencies of Special Guidance Teachers (SGT) in inclusive education within the city of Surakarta, focusing on the planning, implementation, challenges, and solutions related to the provision of educational services for Children with Special Needs (CSN). Research data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation at SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS, which are two inclusive schools with distinct characteristics.

The findings from observations and interviews indicate that all-inclusive schools involved in the study have SGTs appointed directly by the school administration. The majority of these SGTs come from a background in special education or are regular classroom teachers who have been assigned additional responsibilities to support CSN. However, a gap remains in the planning and implementation of inclusive education programs, which adversely affects the learning effectiveness for CSN.

The Planning of Special Guidance Teachers in Inclusive Education Services

Based on interviews and documentation, the planning conducted by Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) encompasses identification, assessment, Individual Learning Programs (PPI), specialized programs, and curriculum modifications. However, it has been observed that both SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS continue to face challenges in developing systematic planning. The larger number of students with special needs compared to the available GPK results in suboptimal service planning.

Observational findings indicate that at SDN I Pajang, assessments for students with special needs have been administratively implemented since their initial enrollment, although these assessments remain limited to internal evaluations that do not involve special education experts. At SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS, planning for identification, assessment, and PPI has not been well-documented, resulting in a lack of clear guidance on providing services for students with special needs (ABK). This situation suggests that the standards for assessment and service planning in

inclusive schools vary significantly, depending on the policies and readiness of each institution. Table 2 summarizes the research findings and results.

TABLE 2. Analysis of research results on special guidance teacher planning in inclusive schools

Aspects	SDN I Pajang	SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS	Analysis
Number of ABK and GPK	15 ABK, 6 GPK (only 2 with PLB background)	13 ABK, more GPK with PLB background	The imbalance between the number of ABK and GPK results in limitations to inclusive education services.
Identification	Implemented since the beginning of school	Not yet systematically documented	SDN I Pajang is more advanced in identification, but documentation is not optimal at SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS.
Assessment	Already implemented, but only based on internal school assessment without involvement of special education experts	Not yet carried out comprehensively and not systematically documented	Assessment standards still vary and do not involve specialists in special education.
Individual Learning Program (PPI)	Already implemented, but only based on internal assessment	Still in the development stage, not yet well documented	PPI in both schools still needs improvement in designing based on the individual needs of ABK.
Special Program	Less structured, due to limited GPK staff	Not yet formally formulated in school policy	Both still need to develop specialized programs that are more systematic and tailored to the needs of ABK.
Curriculum Modification	Already exists, but not yet optimally integrated into learning	Already carried out, but still individual adaptation without a clear system	Curriculum modifications need to be more systematic and based on a differentiation approach.

Implementation of Special Guidance Teacher Services in Inclusive Education

The implementation of inclusive education services by the Special Education Personnel (GPK) involves identifying the needs of students with special needs (ABK), assessing their development, and executing an Individual Learning Programs (PPI), modifying the curriculum, and providing guidance in subjects tailored to the needs of ABK. Observations and interviews indicate that while identification has been conducted across all surveyed schools, the documentation of identification results has not been consistently maintained.

At Lazuwardi Kamila GIS Elementary School, it was found that GPK has not explicitly documented the progress and challenges faced by ABK during the learning process. In contrast, at SDN I Pajang, assessments have been conducted since the initial enrollment of students with special needs. However, these assessments primarily focus on general student characteristics rather than employing a multidisciplinary approach that includes special education experts. According to school documents and interviews with GPK, the assessments carried out in these inclusive schools still rely on tests from psychologists or specialist doctors (psychiatrists, orthopedists), without involving special education professionals in the decision-making process regarding learning strategies for ABK.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that inconsistencies in planning and implementing assessments affect the effectiveness of inclusive education services. The lack of involvement of special education experts in the assessment process and the development of PPI results in learning programs for ABK that are less targeted and do not fully address the individual needs of the students. These findings underscore the need for a more integrated, multidisciplinary assessment model that can be replicated in similar educational contexts worldwide. By demonstrating how contextual barriers impact assessment practices in developing countries, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance inclusive education systems beyond Indonesia.

Problems of Special Guidance Teachers in Providing Services in Inclusive Schools in Surakarta City

Based on the research results, it was found that Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) in inclusive schools in Surakarta City still face various challenges in providing educational services for Children with Special Needs (ABK). Administratively, the process of identification, assessment, preparation of Individual Learning Programs (PPI), behavior modification, and development of special programs has not been fully optimal. The results of interviews with GPK and school principals revealed that one of the primary causes of this problem is the educational background of GPK, where many of them come from class teachers or subject teachers who lack certification in Special Education (PLB). As a result, their understanding of the needs of inclusive education and the characteristics of ABK is still limited. This limited competence has an impact on the lack of effectiveness in designing adaptive learning strategies and providing individual services to ABK. Observations at SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS revealed that some GPK with a PLB background have a greater workload, as they are responsible not only for teaching ABK but also for providing informal training to colleagues on inclusive learning strategies. This difference in educational background leads to disparities in the implementation of learning methods that are tailored to the needs of ABK.

TABLE 3. Analysis of problems of special guidance teachers in inclusive schools in surakarta city

Aspects	SDN I Pajang	SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS	Analysis
Number of ABK and GPK	15 ABK, 6 GPK (only 2 have a PLB background)	13 ABK, more GPK with PLB background	The imbalance between the number of ABK and GPK causes a high workload, especially for GPK with a PLB background.
Educational Background of GPK	The majority are from class teachers/subject teachers, and only two GPK have a PLB background	Most GPK are PLB graduates	SDN I Pajang experiences a competency gap, while SD Lazuwardi is better prepared in terms of GPK expertise.
GPK Workload	GPK with a PLB background has additional responsibilities in training colleagues	More GPK with PLB background, but still experiencing challenges in handling students with behavioral disabilities	GPK at SDN I Pajang has a heavier burden because they have to guide ABK while also providing informal training to other teachers.
Types of ABK Obstacles	Deaf, mentally retarded, autism, mild learning disabilities	Deaf, mentally retarded, autism, slow learners, Down syndrome, ADHD	SD Lazuwardi has a more complex variety of ABK obstacles, which require a more specific approach.
Availability of Professional Training	Minimal training in handling ABK with communication disabilities such as deafness and autism	Still need further training related to behavioral interventions and curriculum modifications	Special training for GPK is still limited, especially in dealing with ABK with communication and behavioral disorders.
Learning Support Facilities	Learning aids are still minimal, limited human resources in inclusive education	Have more assistive devices, but not enough to support the learning of ABK with complex special needs	Inclusive education facilities remain inadequate, particularly in the provision of special learning aids.
Multidisciplinary Assessment and Assistance	Only based on internal school assessments without the involvement of experts	Assessment is still not systematically documented, but is starting to involve specialist assessments	Both schools need a multidisciplinary team-based assessment, involving educational psychologists and occupational therapists, to improve the effectiveness of services for ABK.

At SDN I Pajang, there are 15 students with special needs with various types of disabilities, including hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, and mild learning disabilities. Meanwhile, SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS has 13 students with special needs, with more diverse categories such as hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, slow learning, Down syndrome, and ADHD. Interviews with GPK in both schools showed that the biggest

challenge in assisting students is the lack of professional training in dealing with special needs, with communication disabilities, such as hearing impairment and autism.

In addition to the competency factor, the documentation results indicate that learning support facilities for students with special needs are still inadequate in several inclusive schools. These limitations include the lack of specialized learning aids, the shortage of human resources who specialize in inclusive education, and limited access to multidisciplinary assessments involving experts such as educational psychologists and occupational therapists. The imbalance between the number of special needs students and the available GPK staff further exacerbates this condition, resulting in a learning process that is not fully optimal for special needs students. Table 3 summarizes field findings regarding obstacles in implementing inclusive learning in schools.

Strategies and Solutions in Overcoming the Problems of Special Guidance Teacher Services in Inclusive Schools in Surakarta City

Despite encountering various challenges, the Special Education Teachers (GPK) continue to strive for the enhancement of service quality for students with special needs (ABK) through a range of strategies. Interviews and observations indicate that at SDN I Pajang, GPK collaborates with classroom teachers to exchange information regarding the learning materials that have been delivered, both before and after the lessons. This initiative aims to ensure that the content provided remains accessible to ABK with the necessary adaptations. Furthermore, GPK engages in regular discussions with colleagues to seek solutions to issues that arise during the learning process.

At SD Lazuardi Kamila GIS, GPK endeavors to adapt the regular curriculum to be comprehensible for ABK, although coordination with classroom teachers has not yet reached an optimal level. Some of the challenges faced include a lack of consistent coordination between GPK and classroom teachers, which results in difficulties in determining the most suitable teaching methods for ABK. Classroom observations reveal that while GPK has provided support to students, the teaching approaches employed have not fully aligned with the individual needs of the learners.

In addition to the efforts made at the school level, documentation and interviews with the local education office reveal that the Surakarta City Education Office has taken steps to enhance the competencies of GPK through training programs and workshops. These initiatives aim to provide a deeper understanding of inclusive education, including effective teaching strategies that can be applied within the classroom. The education office has also allocated funds for inclusion to conduct a two-day workshop, attended by school principals and teacher representatives from inclusive schools in Surakarta. This workshop is designed to equip teachers with the skills necessary to develop adaptive learning programs, assess ABK, and integrate differentiated teaching methods into an inclusive curriculum.

In addition to workshops, Learning Community Group (LKG) activities are held every two months to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education programs in each school. This discussion forum enables GPKs to share their experiences and challenges in supporting children with special needs, as well as explore solutions that can be applied in the context of inclusive schools. Additionally, the Special Guidance Teacher forum in Surakarta conducts routine evaluations every three months to enhance the quality of inclusive education services. The steps taken at the school level and the policies of the education office demonstrate that, although various challenges remain in implementing inclusive education, there are real initiatives to improve GPK competencies and enhance the effectiveness of services for children with special needs. However, further evaluation is needed regarding the impact of the training program on improving GPK skills and implementing inclusive services in schools targeted by the program.

DISCUSSIONS

Inclusive education aims to ensure that all learners, including those with special needs, have equal access to quality education within the same environment as regular students (Ministerial Regulation No. 70 of 2009). The success of implementing inclusive education is heavily reliant on the preparedness of schools, particularly regarding the competencies of educators, specifically Special Guidance Teachers (SGT). However, research conducted at SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuardi Kamila GIS indicates that the competencies and educational backgrounds of SGTs remain significant challenges in supporting inclusive learning. At SDN I Pajang, only two out of six SGTs possess a background in Special Education, resulting in a limited understanding of the individual needs of students with special

needs. Classroom observations reveal that SGTs without a Special Education background continue to employ less adaptive teaching methods, such as using pointing words in lessons for visually impaired students or overly complex language for students with intellectual disabilities. These findings align with research by Majoko (2019), which emphasizes that essential competencies for inclusive teachers include assessment, differentiated instruction, and behavior management. Furthermore, the disparities in the preparedness of educators lead to variations in the effectiveness of the Individual Learning Program (ILP) and curriculum modification strategies (Yuwono & Okech, 2021).

Meanwhile, SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS has more GPK with a special needs background, which makes the learning process run more optimally. However, challenges still arise in dealing with students with behavioral disabilities, such as ADHD and autism. Interviews with GPK showed that they faced limitations in implementing behavior modification techniques, which are ideally handled by experts such as occupational therapists or educational psychologists. (Le Fanu et al., 2022) highlighted that a tiered support system is very important in increasing collaboration between GPK and experts to ensure more effective interventions for ABK. In addition, the lack of clarity in the division of roles and jurisdictions of GPK in inclusive education is still an obstacle (Göransson et al., 2019), so efforts to improve professional competence through practice-based training and strengthening collaboration between schools and experts are strategic steps that need to be optimized (Anaby et al., 2020). Therefore, to increase the effectiveness of inclusive education, schools need to implement a multidisciplinary approach that involves teachers, experts, and develop a more adaptive curriculum (Hermanto & Pamungkas, 2023).

In addition to the competence of teachers, this research has revealed that the planning and implementation of assessments in inclusive education have not yet been conducted systematically. At SDN I Pajang, assessments have been initiated since the early stages of student enrollment; however, they are limited to initial identification and do not involve multidisciplinary assessments from relevant experts. Documentation indicates that the assessments primarily rely on test results from psychologists or specialized doctors, such as psychiatrists and orthopedists, without considering evaluations from special education professionals. This situation aligns with the findings of Majoko (2019), which emphasize that assessments in inclusive education should adopt a multidisciplinary approach, engaging teachers, educational psychologists, and therapists to ensure that the learning strategies employed are truly tailored to the individual needs of students. At SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS, assessments and the Individual Learning Program (PPI) have yet to be systematically documented, resulting in suboptimal intervention planning for students with special needs. (Sundqvist et al., 2019) highlight that the lack of collaboration among teachers, experts, and policymakers in assessments contributes to the ineffectiveness of the learning strategies implemented, thereby hindering the optimal execution of inclusive education. Consequently, the implementation of team-based multidisciplinary assessments is a strategic step that needs to be enhanced to improve the effectiveness of inclusive education (Göransson et al., 2019).

In addition to teacher competency and assessment issues, support from the education office and school policies are also key factors in the success of inclusive education. The results of interviews with representatives from the Surakarta education office revealed that the government has made efforts to enhance the quality of inclusive education through workshops, seminars, and training for Special Guidance Teachers (GPK). The education office allocated funds to hold an intensive two-day training session for principals, subject teachers, and GPK from various inclusive schools in Surakarta, with the aim of increasing the capacity of GPK in implementing inclusive learning strategies and strengthening coordination between GPK and class teachers. Additionally, the Learning Community Group (LKG) activity, held every two months, serves as a forum for GPK to share experiences, best practices, and discuss solutions to the challenges they face in the field. (Yasin et al., 2023) emphasized that a community-based approach to inclusive teacher professional development can increase the effectiveness of inclusive education, because it allows teachers to share insights and adapt learning strategies based on direct experience. Therefore, strengthening collaboration between schools, education offices, and experts, as well as developing more sustainable training programs, are strategic steps in increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education in Indonesia (Ketema Dabi & Negassa Golga, 2024).

Based on the results of this study and supported by various previous studies, it can be concluded that the competence of Special Guidance Teachers (GPK), comprehensive assessments, policy support, and ongoing training are the main factors in the success of inclusive education. Inclusive schools need a more systematic strategy in developing GPK competencies, including through practice-based training that focuses on the application of differentiated learning strategies, curriculum modifications, and behavioral interventions for Children with Special Needs (Majoko, 2019)(Sundqvist et al., 2019). In addition, collaboration with experts such as educational

psychologists, occupational therapists, and special education specialists is an important element in increasing the effectiveness of assessments and the preparation of Individual Learning Programs (PPIs) (Göransson et al., 2019). Furthermore, policy support and ongoing training programs from the education office, as have been implemented through workshops and the Learning Community Group (LKG) forum in Surakarta City, have proven to be strategic steps in strengthening GPK competencies and increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education as a whole (Anaby et al., 2020).

The strength of this study lies in its descriptive, qualitative approach, which allows for in-depth exploration of the role, challenges, and strategies of GPK in the context of inclusive education, particularly in inclusive schools in Surakarta. In addition, this study reveals the gap in GPK competency between public and private schools, as well as the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in the assessment and planning of inclusive education. However, this study has limitations in its scope, as it only focuses on two inclusive schools, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized widely. Additionally, the limitations in involving experts from the fields of educational psychology and occupational therapy mean that this study cannot fully explore specialist-based interventions in inclusive education. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve more inclusive schools with diverse backgrounds, as well as to explore the role of cross-disciplinary collaboration in supporting the success of inclusive education for children with special needs more deeply.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that the success of inclusive education in Surakarta City is greatly influenced by the competence of Special Guidance Teachers (GPK), a comprehensive assessment system, policy support, and ongoing training. Findings at SDN I Pajang and SD Lazuwardi Kamila GIS indicate that the inequality in educational backgrounds of GPK is a major challenge in providing optimal services for Children with Special Needs (ABK). In addition, the assessment system, which is still limited to initial evaluation without the involvement of special education experts, hinders the effectiveness of compiling Individual Learning Programs (PPI). However, efforts to improve GPK competence through workshops, Learning Community Group (LKG) forums, and periodic evaluations from the education office are positive steps in strengthening the implementation of inclusive education. As a recommendation, inclusive schools should enhance their GPK capacity through intensive, practice-based training, particularly in adaptive learning strategies and classroom management for ABK with more complex special needs. In addition, collaboration with experts such as educational psychologists and occupational therapists needs to be strengthened to improve the quality of assessment and intervention for ABK. Local governments are also advised to provide more certification training programs for GPK, as well as ensure that each inclusive school has educators with adequate PLB qualifications. With these steps, it is hoped that inclusive education can operate more effectively and provide access to higher-quality learning for all students.

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