

Special Education As A Pillar Of Inclusive Justice Towards Golden Indonesia 2045

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Abstract

The vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 emphasizes the importance of developing inclusive, equitable, and sustainable human resources. In this context, special education holds a strategic role as the foundation of inclusive justice within the education sector. Special education is not merely intended to provide services for students with special needs, but also reflects the state's commitment to fulfilling the right to equal education for all citizens. This paper examines the role of special education in supporting the transformation of the national education system toward genuine inclusivity. Through literature review, national policy analysis, and participatory approaches, it discusses various challenges and strategies for effective implementation of inclusive education. The findings indicate that Indonesia's success in achieving the aspirations of Golden Indonesia 2045 strongly depends on synergy between regulation, teacher capacity, facility provision, and societal paradigm shifts regarding persons with disabilities. Special education must be positioned as a core pillar in shaping a fair, inclusive, and globally competitive golden generation.

Keywords: Special Education, Inclusive Justice, Inclusive Education, Golden Indonesia 2045, Disability.

A. Introduction

Indonesia is currently making significant strides toward the vision of *Golden Indonesia 2045*, which aspires to become an advanced, just, and prosperous nation as it reaches its centennial of independence. One of the key pillars to achieve this vision is the development of excellent and inclusive human resources through the provision of quality education for all citizens, without exception. However, significant disparities still exist in terms of access to and quality of education, especially for vulnerable groups such as children with special needs [1]. Special education, as an integral part of the national education system, plays a vital role in ensuring the fulfillment of educational rights for students with physical, intellectual, emotional, or social barriers. The Indonesian government has demonstrated its commitment through various inclusive education policies, such as Ministry of Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education and Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. Nevertheless, the implementation on the ground remains far from optimal. Many schools are still unprepared in terms of infrastructure and teaching staff to accommodate and assist students with special needs. In addition, societal attitudes and perceptions toward disability remain significant challenges in creating a truly inclusive learning environment.

Justice in education is not merely about providing equal access to all learners but also ensuring that each individual receives services tailored to their specific needs. A just and inclusive education must be capable of accommodating diversity and offering equal opportunities for every child to grow and thrive according to their potential. In this regard, special education functions as a system enhancer that bridges the needs of students with certain impairments so they can actively participate in the social and economic life of the nation [2].

If special education continues to be viewed as a marginal component within the national education system, Indonesia will face difficulties in achieving its ambitious 2045 vision. Therefore, special education must be recognized as a central pillar in the development of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable human capital. Integrating special education into national strategy is not merely a legal or moral obligation, but a strategic investment in building a more resilient, competitive, and socially just society. This paper aims to analyze how special education can serve as a fundamental foundation for realizing inclusive justice towards Golden Indonesia 2045, while also offering insights and strategies to systematically and sustainably strengthen inclusive education practices.

B. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research method using a literature review approach. The methodology focuses on analyzing existing policy documents, academic journals, government regulations, and international conventions related to special and inclusive education. Data were collected through document analysis from reputable national and international sources, including Indonesian laws and education ministry regulations, as well as scholarly publications on inclusive education practices. The research is conducted through three main stages: (1) identifying and collecting relevant documents, (2) analyzing the contents to extract thematic insights on the role and implementation of special education in Indonesia, and (3) synthesizing the findings to provide recommendations aligned with the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. This approach enables an in-depth and systematic understanding of the complexities, challenges, and opportunities in implementing inclusive education, particularly special education as a pillar of inclusive justice. The method is appropriate for normative-empirical research that seeks to formulate transformative educational strategies rooted in policy and practice.

C. Results and Discussion

A. Definition of Special Education

Special education refers to educational services provided to students with special needs or barriers in physical, intellectual, emotional, or social development, or a combination of these challenges. These students may include children with disabilities, those with learning difficulties, and individuals with exceptional intelligence or talents who require educational approaches that differ from those of mainstream education [3].

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 15 states that special education is a form of educational service for learners who face difficulties in the learning process due to physical, emotional, mental, or social disorders and/or who possess exceptional intelligence and talents.

Special education is not merely a supplementary service; it is a concrete implementation of the principles of non-discrimination and equality in education. In practice, special education may be delivered through special schools (SLB), inclusive education units, or special services within regular schools. Learners with special needs may include children with visual, hearing, intellectual, motor, emotional impairments, autism, specific learning disorders, or medical conditions that affect learning. Globally, the approach to special education has evolved from segregation toward inclusive models, emphasizing the presence of students with special needs in regular classrooms with adequate support. This is aligned with Indonesia's commitment to international conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In the Indonesian context, special education is governed by Law No. 20 of 2003, which mandates that education for children with special needs be conducted differently and adaptively according to each student's characteristics [4]. The goal of special education is to provide equal opportunities for children with disabilities or other special needs to access appropriate and meaningful education in accordance with their potential. This includes not only children with disabilities but also those with exceptional abilities in specific areas who require more personalized approaches. Special education in Indonesia is commonly delivered through Special Schools (SLB), which serve children with various disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, intellectual disability, and others. Recently, inclusive education initiatives have also emerged, allowing children with special needs to learn alongside their peers in regular schools with adequate support. This setting fosters interaction, learning, and development in a broader social context, while also helping to reduce social stigma.

Additionally, special education involves flexible and individualized learning services, including direct instruction, assistive technology, and support from qualified educators. This approach aims not only to fulfill educational needs but also to improve the quality of life of students, enable them to contribute actively to society, and prepare them to meet future workforce challenges. Special education plays several crucial roles in supporting the creation of a just and inclusive national education system:

- a. Fulfilling the Right to Education for Every Citizen Special education ensures the right of children with special needs to receive equitable, appropriate, and meaningful education as mandated by the 1945 Constitution and the National Education System Law.
- b. Realizing Social Justice and Inclusion By providing accessible and non-discriminatory educational services, special education directly contributes to achieving social justice and reducing inequality.
- c. Supporting the Optimal Development of Individual Potential Every learner has unique potential that must be nurtured. Special education supports students with special needs to achieve independence, confidence, and active roles in society.
- d. Serving as a Key Component in Inclusive Education Special education provides a foundational base for implementing inclusive education, where children with special needs can learn together with others in diverse and supportive environments.

- e. Producing Competitive Human Resources By addressing the needs of all learners, including those with special needs, the national education system can produce a resilient and globally competitive generation, aligned with the Golden Indonesia 2045 vision.
- f. Reinforcing Human Rights Principles in Education Special education is an essential tool in ensuring that all children, regardless of their physical or mental conditions, receive dignified learning opportunities, thus reflecting inclusive principles in the fulfillment of human rights in education.
- g. Increasing Educational Participation for Children with Special Needs Through special education, the government promotes increased school participation among children who have traditionally been marginalized from mainstream education, contributing to higher Human Development Index (HDI) scores.
- h. Cultivating a Culture of Tolerance and Empathy from an Early Age Integrating children with special needs into mainstream classrooms fosters values of tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity from an early age—crucial for building an inclusive and harmonious society.
- i. Encouraging Innovation in Learning and Curriculum Design Special education requires creative and adaptive approaches, driving the development of differentiated curricula, instructional strategies, and assistive technologies that can also benefit general education.
- j. Contributing to Equitable National Development Special education contributes in the long term to forming productive human resources despite their limitations, in line with the sustainable development goal of leaving no one behind, especially SDG 4 on quality education.

B. Current Conditions of Special Education

Education is a fundamental right for every citizen, including children with special needs. In Indonesia, the education system recognizes the importance of special and inclusive education as essential to equitable human development. However, the implementation of special and inclusive education across Indonesia still faces complex structural, technical, and social challenges [5]. The following outlines the current conditions of special and inclusive education:

1. Special Education through Special Schools (SLB) Special Schools (SLB) remain the primary institutions offering education services to children with special needs. These schools are categorized based on students' disabilities: SLB-A for visual impairments, SLB-B for hearing impairments, SLB-C for intellectual disabilities, SLB-D for physical disabilities, SLB-E for emotional and behavioral disorders, and SLB-G for multiple disabilities.

Despite their contributions, SLBs are limited in number relative to the growing population of students with special needs throughout Indonesia. This scarcity results in many children lacking access to appropriate educational services, especially in remote or infrastructure-deficient areas.

2. Inclusive Education in Regular Schools Since the issuance of Ministry of Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education, the Indonesian government has encouraged regular schools to accept and support students with special needs. Inclusive education promotes the principle of learning together in a non-discriminatory environment with adequate support for diverse student needs [6].

However, the implementation of inclusive education remains suboptimal. Many schools lack trained teachers, accessible infrastructure, and flexible, adaptive curricula. In some cases, schools subtly reject students with special needs due to perceptions that their presence may “disrupt” classroom activities.

3. Unequal Policy Support Legally, Indonesia has comprehensive frameworks supporting educational rights for all, including Law No. 20 of 2003 and Law No. 8 of 2016. Nonetheless, effective implementation heavily relies on the commitment of local governments. While some regions like Yogyakarta, West Java, and Bali have made notable progress in inclusive education, others remain significantly underdeveloped.
4. Role of Teachers and Education Personnel A major obstacle in implementing inclusive education is the shortage of educators trained to work with students with special needs. Inclusive teacher training is sporadic and uneven across regions. Many general education teachers lack pedagogical understanding and appropriate strategies, making education services less effective [7].
5. Social and Cultural Challenges Beyond technical and structural issues, social stigma and discrimination against children with special needs persist. Many in society—including educators—lack awareness of the importance of inclusive education, often viewing students with special needs as burdens or hindrances. The lack of public education and advocacy campaigns slows social acceptance of inclusive practices.
6. Role of Non-formal Institutions and Communities In response to limited governmental facilities, NGOs, foundations, and parent communities play active roles in offering alternative education and support for children with special needs. Though limited in scale, their presence is vital in promoting inclusive practices at the grassroots level.
7. Toward a More Inclusive System To achieve an inclusive and just Golden Indonesia 2045, the national education system must integrate inclusive principles holistically—from policies and curricula to instruction and evaluation. The government must prepare a roadmap for inclusive and special education development,

enhance teacher training, expand support facilities, and strengthen collaboration among schools, local governments, communities, and the private sector.

D. Challenges in Special Education

Several challenges hinder special education as a pillar of inclusive justice towards Golden Indonesia 2045:

1. **Limited Access and Infrastructure** Many schools, especially in remote areas, lack disability-friendly facilities such as ramps, special toilets, or accessible classrooms, making it difficult for children with special needs to participate in regular school environments [8].
2. **Lack of Competent Educators** Most teachers in general education have not received specialized training to support students with special needs. This leads to limited pedagogical understanding, inadequate inclusive teaching strategies, and minimal classroom differentiation [9].
3. **Scarcity of Assistive Tools and Educational Technology** Essential tools such as hearing aids, Braille printers, or special learning software are rarely available in schools. Adaptive technology remains underutilized, despite its importance in supporting students with special needs.
4. **Social Stigma and Lack of Public Awareness** Many community members, including other students' parents, still hold negative views toward children with special needs, perceiving them as burdens. This stigma is a significant barrier to implementing inclusive education [10].
5. **Disparities in Inclusive Education Implementation Across Regions** Some cities or districts have advanced inclusive education programs due to proactive local governments, while others lag far behind. This reflects the absence of a universally enforced national standard.
6. **Ineffective Policy Implementation** Despite the issuance of regulations such as Ministry Regulation No. 70 of 2009 and Law No. 8 of 2016, field implementation remains weak. Monitoring, support, and sanctions for non-compliance are insufficient.
7. **Inflexible Curriculum System** The national curriculum is largely uniform and does not adequately address individual student needs. Children with special needs require adaptive, flexible, and capability-based curricula.
8. **Inaccurate Data on Children with Special Needs** Many children with special needs are unregistered or unidentified within the education system, preventing them from accessing their rights and hindering government planning.
9. **Limited Budget Allocation** Funding for inclusive education is still very limited and often not prioritized in education budgets, especially at the regional level. As a result, human resource development, teacher training, and provision of assistive tools are not implemented optimally.

Conclusion

Special education is not merely a part of the national education system—it is a tangible representation of the state's commitment to ensuring the right to education for all citizens without discrimination. Within the grand vision of Golden Indonesia 2045, special education holds a strategic position as a main pillar in building a just, inclusive, and civilized nation. Indonesia's success in developing superior, creative, and globally competitive human resources cannot be realized without the active involvement of persons with disabilities and students with special needs in the educational process. The implementation of inclusive education remains complex and multidimensional. There are persistent gaps between policy and practice, a shortage of trained human resources, inaccessible facilities, and limited technological and data support. Cultural barriers—such as stigma, discrimination, and a lack of public awareness regarding the potential of children with special needs—further indicate that inclusivity has not yet become a shared cultural norm in many parts of Indonesia. Nonetheless, some promising progress and opportunities have emerged. Increased attention to inclusive education in national policies, support from civil society organizations, the adoption of adaptive educational technologies, and the willingness of some schools to embrace student diversity signal a positive trajectory for the future of education in Indonesia.

Realizing special education as a pillar of inclusive justice requires more than administrative approaches or normative policy frameworks. A comprehensive transformation is needed—one that includes paradigm shifts, strong political commitment, equitable budget allocation, and active community participation. Education must become a space of empowerment, not limitation; a place for developing potential, not discouraging spirit. If the education system succeeds in providing fair developmental space for all children, including those with special needs, Indonesia will not only produce a golden generation in quantitative terms but also one that is mature in moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, special education is the key that unlocks the gateway to a truly inclusive society—a solid foundation for realizing Golden Indonesia 2045.

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