

# MUHAMMADIYAH AND PROGRESSIVE EFFORTS FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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## ABSTRAK

**Abstrak:** Jumlah kajian ilmiah terkait kontribusi nyata Muhammadiyah di bidang pendidikan sangatlah berlimpah. Akan tetapi, dalam konteks kontribusi Muhammadiyah di bidang pendidikan khusus/inklusif masih sangatlah minim, padahal dalam beberapa tahun belakangan lembaga pendidikan Muhammadiyah sangatlah progresif untuk memfasilitasi hal ini. Karena itu tulisan ini bertujuan untuk 1) mendeskripsikan upaya-upaya progresif Muhammadiyah di bidang pendidikan inklusif; 2) Menganalisis peluang dan tantangan pendidikan inklusi di sekolah Muhammadiyah, dan 3) Memberikan beberapa rekomendasi yang konstruktif untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan inklusi di sekolah Muhammadiyah. Makalah ini menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan pada sumber-sumber yang relevan seperti jurnal ilmiah, buku, dan berita kemudian dianalisis secara sistematis sesuai kaidah-kaidah ilmiah. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Muhammadiyah telah banyak berkontribusi dalam pemenuhan hak pendidikan anak berkebutuhan khusus, terutama melalui program pendidikan inklusi di sekolah Muhammadiyah. Temuan penelitian ini dapat dijadikan acuan dan pedoman bagi para pemangku kepentingan dalam mengevaluasi dan mengembangkan kurikulum sumber daya manusia dan pendidikan inklusif di sekolah Muhammadiyah ke arah yang lebih baik.

**Abstract:** The number of scientific studies related to the actual contribution of Muhammadiyah to education is abundant. However, the gift of Muhammadiyah in special/inclusive education is minimal, although, in recent years, Muhammadiyah educational institutions have advanced to facilitate this. Therefore, this paper aims to 1) describe Muhammadiyah's progressive efforts in the field of inclusive education, 2) Analyze the opportunities and challenges of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools, and 3) Provide some constructive recommendations to improve the quality of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools. This paper uses a literature study method on relevant sources such as scientific journals, books, and news, then analyzed systematically according to scientific principles. The study results show that Muhammadiyah has contributed much to fulfilling the educational rights of children with special needs, primarily through inclusive education programs in Muhammadiyah schools. The findings of this study can be used as a reference and guideline for stakeholders in evaluating and developing a human resource curriculum and inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools in a better direction.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organization founded by KH. Ahmad Dahlan since 1912 in Kauman village, Yogyakarta. The Muhammadiyah organization already has various charities, one of which is in the field of education. This year Muhammadiyah will hold the 48th congress in Solo with the theme "*Memajukan Indonesia, Mencerahkan Semesta.*" As one of the oldest and largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, the contribution of Muhammadiyah to society cannot be doubted. Especially in education, from elementary to tertiary levels, Muhammadiyah plays a big role in Indonesia. On the other hand, something that is immensely

proud and deserves to be appreciated is the serious concern of Muhammadiyah in fulfilling the rights of children with special needs to obtain quality education through inclusive schools under the auspices of Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah's contribution to inclusive education reflects that education under the aegis of Muhammadiyah is humanistic.

In the practice of inclusive education held in Indonesia, various problems are still found. First, the limited ability of teachers where teachers are not ready to handle children who have diversity in their classes, makes teachers complain, and it is difficult to teach using the same method (Rohim, 2016). Second, there are still rigid curricula and teaching methods

so learning for children with special needs is still not effective (Rohim, 2016). Third, there is still the unavailability of facilities and infrastructure owned by schools for children with special needs, such as resource rooms, learning media, teaching aids, and so on (Rohim, 2016; Setiawan et al., 2020). Fourth, is the low degree of parental concern for handling children with special needs, especially regarding cooperation, and unique programs to provide services for children with special needs (Setiawan et al., 2020). Fifth, children with special needs have difficulty following learning materials in class because their academic abilities lag behind regular children (Setiawan et al., 2020).

It is not uncommon for inclusive schools under the auspices of Muhammadiyah to become reference schools or models for inclusive schools in their area. For example, SLB Muhammadiyah Bireuen in Aceh, SD Muhammadiyah 16, SMA Muhammadiyah X in Surabaya (Putra, 2021). Compared to inclusive education in public schools, inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools has its advantages, especially in developing an inclusive curriculum. Departing from that, this paper tries to 1) describe the progressive efforts of Muhammadiyah in the field of inclusive education; 2) Analyze the opportunities and challenges of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools; dan 3) Provide several constructive recommendations to improve the quality of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools. These three points are essential to answer because there are still not many analytical studies on the contribution of Muhammadiyah in the field of inclusive education.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This paper uses a literature study method on scientific reference sources and is analyzed systematically according to scientific principles. These steps are as follows: 1. Formulating paper questions; 2. Establish criteria; 3. Selecting literature sources; 4. Assessing the quality of the literature; 5 Analyze, synthesize and present findings (Ramdhani et al., 2014). In more detail, as follows, the researcher formulates the key questions that underlie the preparation of this paper, which the researcher will answer and describe in the results and discussion section. In the next stage, the researcher arranges several criteria that will be

analyzed in the paper into points, followed by finding and sorting out relevant and credible sources of literature (scientific articles/books/news) related to inclusive education in Muhammadiyah educational institutions. Finally, the researcher conducted a critical study of the literature sources that had been obtained to be summarized and systematically described according to the points of the research questions at the beginning.

## **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Inclusive Education in Muhammadiyah**

The implementation of inclusive education in schools is a form of joint effort to fulfill children's rights to education, including children with special needs who have often received discrimination regarding access to education. Then in practice, inclusive education is not a new thing in Muhammadiyah institutions as explained by (Budiarti & Sugito, 2018; Hadis, 2005) that since 2001 inclusive education has been carried out by a Muhammadiyah elementary school in the Gunung Kidul area, Yogyakarta Special Region by accepting two students the down syndrome. Until then, it developed rapidly in other Muhammadiyah schools in Yogyakarta. In a broader context, namely in areas outside Java, the journey of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools is also growing by facilitating various service models and curricula that make it easy for students with special needs to study in inclusive schools without worrying about getting rejected. Normal students discriminate against treatment because they have unique conditions from others, as in some findings in the field (Faridah, 2017).

One of the advantages, according to the researcher's analysis regarding the implementation of education in Muhammadiyah schools, is the rapid development of an inclusive education curriculum model that adapts to the conditions and needs of the school. Starting from the assessment, teaching models, mentoring, and assessment standards, everything is packaged in a fair and balanced manner, and don't forget to add Islamic values based on the uniqueness of each child. This is, of course, following the educational goals of Muhammadiyah, which have

progressive and religious characteristics (Ali, 2016).

Furthermore, based on several works of literature related to the implementation of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools, currently, two models are most widely used, namely the regular class and the regular pull-out class. Both models, both before the pandemic and after the pandemic, are still applied as usual with minor adjustments. Although there are still several weaknesses, the inclusive education model has contributed a lot to the implementation of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools.

## 2. Opportunities for Inclusive Education in Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah schools have become pioneers in establishing an inclusive education system in Indonesia. This indicates that the Muhammadiyah organization supports government policies for the education of children with disabilities following the Minister of Education Regulation Number 70 of 2009 concerning child-friendly inclusive education whose implementation of inclusive education is a shared responsibility between the central government, local government, and related stakeholders. Children with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities in receiving the same education as students in general.

Inclusive schools under the auspices of Muhammadiyah have various advantages; namely, the inclusive curriculum has used a regular curriculum that is modified according to the development of children with disabilities and has inclusive programs that are friendly to people with disabilities.

The curriculum for students with disabilities has been well organized; this has been proven at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Malang by the curriculum for regular students with modifications by special assistant teachers (GPK) according to children's needs (S, 2018). Meanwhile, SD Muhammadiyah Sapen has implemented the 2013 curriculum for students with disabilities adapted to the conditions of the students' abilities. These conditions create a

friendly, communicative, and friendly learning environment (Mayasari, 2016).

A child-friendly inclusion program has also been implemented at SMA Muhammadiyah 10 Surabaya, which is named program "*Sekolah Peduli Anak Hebat*" (SPAH) (Sage, 2018). The SPAH program is based on three arrangements, which include developing the potential of the heart, body, and mind. This means that by developing heart and physical potential, great children are expected to have positive characters so that they support themselves strongly in living their lives then, prioritizing the closeness of heart between teachers and great children in the learning process by paying attention and eliminating punishment. And SPAH learning is carried out flexibly anytime, anywhere, and using any media.

In addition to the SPAH program, SLB Muhammadiyah Bireun has become a model for inclusive schools in Aceh where children with special needs can happily mingle, learn and worship together, play, respect, and love each other so that it has a positive impact on the development of children with special needs (Putra, 2021). Meanwhile, SD Kreatif Muhammadiyah 16 Surabaya has received a lot of appreciation because, for 18 years, it has organized inclusive education that does not discriminate between inclusive and regular students in the same class so that there is a growing sense of empathy for regular students (Syifa, 2020).

## 3. Challenges of Inclusive Education in Muhammadiyah

In practice, inclusive education has been implemented by Muhammadiyah schools; there are still deficiencies that need to be improved in the future. These shortcomings include the lack of special assistant teachers or "*Guru Pendamping Khusus*" (GPK) who have a minimum competency of S1 - Special Education and the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure and smooth support learning for students with disabilities.

The limited number of special assistant teachers or "*Guru Pendamping Khusus*" (GPK) occurred at SD Muhammadiyah Dadapan Sleman, where the emotional condition of the teacher was

unstable due to the limited number of teachers in understanding the material for students with special needs and the lack of responsibility for the role of the special assistant teachers in student learning progress (Banati & Rofiah, 2018). In addition, SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Yogyakarta has a single Special Supervising Teacher (GPK) and is only available on Fridays and Saturdays (Rohim, 2016)

As many as 27.39% are known to lack class assistant teachers (GPK) at elementary schools in Yogyakarta (Tarnoto, 2016). Then, it was found that at SD Muhammadiyah Sapen, there was no special staff for handling deaf and mentally retarded children, and there was no GPK (Mayasari, 2016). Furthermore, it was found that the process of making individual learning program plans for children with special needs was only carried out by GPK, even though ideally individual learning plans (PPI) were made jointly between class teachers or subject teachers with GPK (Firmansyah & Syamsudin, 2017; Ilahi & Rose, 2013).

Teachers for students with special needs have a central and strategic role because they encourage the implementation of learning for students who have extraordinary potential themselves and play a strategic role in managing the diversity in the classroom. The challenge for teachers in inclusive education is that teachers must be able to understand the diversity of student characteristics according to the classification of the types of children with special needs, just as teachers are required to encourage the self-confidence and independence of students with special needs and provide accessibility to a conducive learning environment for students with special needs in inclusive classes (Setiawan et al., 2020). In addition, teachers are required to be able to diagnose and analyze carefully problems and learning strategies in the classroom that are adapted to the conditions of students with special needs. And teachers for pupils with special needs are also required to maximize the learning community to solve each other's learning problems in inclusive classes (Setiawan et al., 2020).

Another challenge in inclusive education under the auspices of Muhammadiyah is the lack

of facilities and infrastructure that support inclusive learning for children with special needs, which results in delays in the learning process so that it has not run optimally. This is following the study results; namely, as many as 87.10% of the problems of lack of facilities and infrastructure that support the implementation of inclusive education occur in elementary schools in the city of Yogyakarta (Tarnoto, 2016). Then, at the SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Yogyakarta, inclusive facilities and infrastructure are not however complete, and there is no renewal of facilities and infrastructure due to limited funds owned by the school (Rohim, 2016).

Another challenge in implementing inclusive education at Muhammadiyah educational institutions during distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is that teachers cannot monitor all learning activities of students with special needs every day at home because some parents do not have cellphones and teachers are required to design learning based on from reflection notes from parents at home whose deliveries vary at different times each day (Rohim, 2016). Furthermore, the challenges in online learning at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Candi are the distance between students and teachers and inadequate facilities and infrastructure (Amrullah & Silvia, 2021).

#### **4. Recommendations for Inclusive Muhammadiyah Education in the Future**

To fix the various shortcomings and obstacles that are still found in inclusive schools under the auspices of Muhammadiyah, several appropriate strategic efforts are needed based on findings in the field. For this reason, the researchers mapped several recommendation points as follows:

##### **a) Human Resources**

Recommendations that can be used to overcome the lack of special supervisory teachers (GPK) are to recruit competent teachers who can handle children with special needs to become GPK, such as graduates of S-1 special education, psychology, and guidance and counseling. All three can be used as the most strategic option to overcome the limited number of special supervisor teachers in

schools. However, suppose the recruitment of GPK is considered financially burdensome. In that case, the school can provide periodic workshops to subject teachers on mentoring children with special needs and collaborative learning models in inclusive schools. The findings from (Rudiyati, 2013) show that the workshop model is proven to improve teacher competence in inclusive schools. In addition, what is no less important is the need for a common understanding between teachers, schools, parents, and local governments regarding the implementation of meaningful, inclusive education in schools.

#### b) Curriculum

The development of a suitable curriculum model will facilitate the implementation of equitable, inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools. Therefore, inclusive schools under the auspices of Muhammadiyah that do not yet have an established inclusive curriculum model can conduct comparative studies and focus group discussions on inclusive schools that are considered curriculum-established in their area. So that later the school can adapt the curriculum model according to the conditions in the school, considering that the process of adapting the general curriculum into the inclusive education curriculum requires several measurable stages and not a short time (Mara & Mara, 2012). No less important is the inclusion of several standard indicators that the central government has prepared into the inclusive curriculum.

#### c) Facilities and Infrastructure

As for the constraints on the limited facilities and infrastructure for children with special needs, it is hoped that Muhammadiyah educational institutions can submit a draft of facilities and infrastructure needs to the local government, the regional DIKDASMEN assembly, as well as private parties who have a high commitment to advancing inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools. However, suppose this is difficult to do due to several factors. In that case, the school can make its own low-cost supporting facilities such as simple games for children with special

needs and borrow technology from Muhammadiyah partner schools with more adequate facilities.

#### d) Curriculum Evaluation Management

The implementation of inclusive education in Muhammadiyah schools still requires continuous supervision, assistance, and evaluation to support better changes in growing community cultural awareness and an inclusive environment that is friendly for children with special needs. In this case, stakeholders such as the principal and the chair of the regional DIKDASMEN assembly have a role in carrying out regular monitoring, be it monthly, semester, or yearly by observing and capturing aspirations directly from parents, special assistant teachers, and students with special needs.

Through collaborative work between various parties within Muhammadiyah as described above, it is hoped that in the future, the schools under the auspices of Muhammadiyah will not only excel in academic and non-academic matters but also excel in terms of access and equality for every Indonesian child. In line with the views of Prof. Haedar Nashir, General Chairperson of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive, on holistic Islamic education that is progressive for the nation (Hanipudin, 2020).

### D. CONCLUSION

The contribution of Muhammadiyah in the effort to fulfill the rights of children with special needs in Indonesia is enormous and valuable to imitate and continues to be developed as a pilot model for inclusive schools in Indonesia. Therefore, to be able to get to that stage, it is necessary to work together, especially between institutions in the field of fulfilling special assistant teachers (GPK), developing an inclusive curriculum, and procuring supporting facilities and infrastructure for children with special needs in Muhammadiyah inclusive schools. Thus, the great aspiration of the Muhammadiyah association in the future to educate all Indonesian children regardless of their background has been realized through inclusive education in quality Muhammadiyah schools.

The results of this study need to be followed up, especially by researchers and lecturers in the Muhammadiyah environment, to develop game media, guidance modules, and android-based learning applications for children with special needs based on findings in Muhammadiyah educational institutions.

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