

Inclusive education in the National Education Act of Indonesia and its application in the primary school: Lessons for developing countries

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Abstract

Countries are moving towards inclusive education and are undertaking reforms in their education systems according to their culture and socio-economic status. They are formulating education laws, policies and plans to implement inclusive education. This study looks at the National Education Act, 20/2003 of Indonesia and its application in the field. The intention is to examine the Indonesian experience and make suggestions for the inclusive education movement in Bangladesh. Relevant information was collected through document analysis; interviews with education supervisors and teachers; and observation of classrooms in three primary schools and two madrasahs. Having looked at the law and its implementation in schools, recommendations have been made for planning and implementation of inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Key Word: Reflection, National Education Act, Inclusive Education, Indonesia, Lessons for Bangladesh.

I. Introduction

Rationale and objective of the study

Each country has to develop its own strategy or model to transform the existing education system towards inclusion. It is presumed that as a developing country in the same region with high population attempting to reform national systems and move towards greater inclusion, the experience of Indonesia would be pertinent to Bangladesh.

The main objectives of the study are:

1) To examine the principles of inclusive education as reflected in the National Education Act (20/2003) of Indonesia; 2) To explore how inclusive education is incorporated into primary school; and 3) To discuss and make recommendations for inclusive education in Indonesia and Bangladesh

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Methodology

This study followed three steps for data collection and analysis: 1) review of relevant documents (the Indonesian language documents were available in translation from IDP in Norway), 2) interviews with 20 purposefully selected knowledgeable informants - one education officer, six education supervisors, four resource teachers, six head teachers and three regular school teachers, and 3) classroom observation in three primary schools and two madrasahs in Yogyakarta

II. Background

Inclusive education (IE) is currently a universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed countries in the world. It is an evolving concept that can guide strategies for educational change. It involves identifying and addressing the sources and consequences of exclusion in education, adopting the holistic framework of EFA goals and recognizing education as a human right (UNESCO, 2001).

UNESCO (2005) defines inclusion “as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.” It requires a shift which involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies. Furthermore, as stated by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow (2002) in their proposal for an inclusion index, “inclusion is about making schools supportive and stimulating places for staff as well as students ... it is about building communities which encourage and celebrate their achievements.”

In inclusive education, students, irrespective of their personal or group characteristics related to different abilities - gender, income status, ethnic and linguistic identity, and vulnerabilities of different kinds - will be included in the mainstream education (ibid.). Among these, children with ability-related special needs require extra support in the regular school environment. The term “inclusive education” has often been used to describe the education of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools (Bryant, Smith, and Bryant, 2007). It represents a paradigm shift from a focus on the management of student deficits (i.e., the identification, classification and remediation of individuals with special needs) to a more holistic appreciation and cognizance of the different learning needs and creation of optimal learning environments for all students, not just those with disabilities (Stainback and Stainback 1990).

Education Act and inclusive education in some countries

Many countries are introducing education acts recognizing education as a right for all citizens. For example, in 2009 the Indian parliament passed the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education Act. According to this law, every child aged 6-14 will be provided 8 years of elementary education in an age-appropriate classroom in the vicinity of

his/ her neighborhood. The law also requires that all private schools should enroll 25 percent of the children from weaker sections and the disadvantaged community in their incoming class (Sharba Shiksha Aviyan, 2011). Ireland's Education Act, 1998, aimed to "make provisions for the ... education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or a special educational need." Specifically, Sections 6, 7 and 21 refer to the rights of students with special educational needs to education whether in mainstream schools or in separate settings (ASTI, 2011).

The key issues of inclusive education and policy review

Susan J. Peter (World Bank, 2003) proposes a conceptual framework for review of education policies related to inclusive education. She suggests that four domains of inputs, processes, outcomes, and contextual factors should be given attention in what she calls an "open system" of policy development. An open system not only accounts for external factors influencing inclusive education (e.g., policy, legislation, cultural and socio-economic conditions), but considers these 'external' factors as integral components of inclusive education development as a whole. The issues of curriculum content, teacher qualification and training, Braille and sign language support, evaluation plan, and diverse student characteristic are considered to be important input elements. The responsibility and authority of different actors and collaborative team support are taken into account as parts of the process. The national education policy and goal and education management system are the contextual factors which should be analyzed and reformed (if they do not support IE sufficiently). If the contextual factors (policies) are appropriate and applied effectively then the whole inclusive education process will work appropriately. Although this framework was proposed in the context of South America, it appears to have broader relevance for developing countries. The key issues for policy review and development are identified as:

- Responsible authorities
- Education provision
- Teacher qualification
- Student entrance
- Curriculum
- Medium of instruction, and
- Evaluation process

In this study, a guideline for reviewing education policies suggested by UNESCO (2003) was followed in considering the above key issues. The guideline, in the form of a set of questions, consisted of the following:

- Are the identified issues addressed in the policy?
- Does the existing curricular content support IE?
- How are the curricular content put into practice?
- What are the barriers to implementation of policy?

- What educational content will support special needs in the mainstream general education?

Questions and checklists were formulated in relation to the key issues to explore the exiting situation in Indonesia.

III. The Concept of Inclusive Education in Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world with a land area of 1.96 million km² and inhabited by a population of 220 million. It is situated in the south-eastern edge of Asia, in close proximity to Australia. About 1.48 million people in Indonesia are categorized as disabled, of whom 21.4% are school age children. Only 25% of these children are enrolled in special schools (Hadis, 2006). The special schools are designed to implement the 9 Year Compulsory Education System of the country. The philosophical motto of the country is "Bhineka Tinggal Ika" which means "Unity in diversity;" For education, the national philosophy is translated as "unity with diversity of learner's characteristics and conditions," which provides the philosophical underpinning for the inclusive education concept in Indonesia (Tarsidi, 2004).

The journey towards integrated education in Indonesia began in the early 1960's with a few blind students in Bandung being provided educational service up to the junior high school level (Tersidi, 2004). Since 1986, the Ministry of Education started to include relatively capable children with special needs in regular schools together with other children. With the emergence of a new orientation in inclusive education, Indonesia adopted Act No 20/2003 for the National Education System. It was stated in Explanation to Article 15 of this Act: "Special Education is provision of education program for the disabled and/or the gifted learners, organized inclusively or exclusively at basic and secondary level of schooling".

The 2003 Act marks the transition of the integrated schools into inclusive education schools, with a broad concept of inclusion going beyond children with special needs or "disabilities." In 2003 the Ministry of Education ambitiously set the goal of increasing the number of inclusive schools to three in each municipality. Since then, over 1500 children with special needs have been placed in regular schools (Directorate of Management of Special Education, 2005).

The concept of inclusive education, underlying activities and plans of IE implementation in Indonesia contains the following elements:

1. A continuous process and effort to discover the means to cope with and respond to the various individual needs of children,
2. Paying serious attention on the methods to overcome the obstacles to a child's progress in learning,
3. Children participating actively in learning and obtaining knowledge that is essential for his/her future life, and

4. Designing and directing education programs for children who are marginalised, excluded, and need special education.

(Hadis, 2005)

Indonesia established “Bandung Declaration, in 2004 and “Bukit Tinggi Declaration in , 2005 on the implementation of inclusive education. These declarations pledged provisions of all facilities including equal education, health, social well being and security for person with special needs (JICA, 2005).

The System of Special Education in Indonesia

Special education is provided at primary and secondary education level and is part of the national education system (Directorate of management of special education 2005).

A. There are special school provisions at four stages of general education:

1. Kindergarten (2 years)
2. Primary school (at least 6 years)
3. Junior secondary school (at least 3 years)
4. Senior secondary school (at least 3 years)

Separate (segregated) special schools of the following types exist:

1. SLB A – Special school for visual impairment
2. SLB B – Special school for hearing impairment
3. SLB C – Special school for mild intellectual disability
4. SLB C1 – Special school for moderate intellectual disability
5. SLB D – Special school for physical impairment
6. SLB E – Special school for emotional-social behavior difficulties and impairment
7. SLB G – Special school for multiple disabilities
8. SLB M – Special school for autistic children

Education administration and management

The Ministry of Education and Culture (now the Ministry of National Education, MONE) is responsible for the planning and execution of education. At the central level, the organizational structure of MONE consists of the following units: the Secretariat General; the National Institute for Educational Research and Development; the Inspectorate General; the Directorate General of Basic and Secondary Education; the Directorate General of Higher Education; the Directorate of Management of Special Education; the Directorate General of Out-of-School Education, Youth and Sports; and the Directorate General of Culture (SEAMEO, 2011).

At the lower level, MONE is represented by a Provincial Office of Education in each of the twenty-seven provinces, and by a District Office in each of the 305 districts. The major task of the provincial and district offices is to operationalize, manage, adapt and implement ministerial policies on education and culture in the context of distinctive local features and local and environmental needs (ibid.).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for the Islamic primary school (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or MI), which is equivalent to primary school, and for the Islamic junior secondary school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah or MT), which is equivalent to junior secondary school.

IV. Findings of the Study

Indonesian government has formulated Education Act 20/2003 in 2003. The education policy, planning, and strategies have been formulated on the basis of this law. In this paper, this law has been analyzed in relation to responsible authority, education provisions, teacher's qualification, student's entrance, curriculum, medium of instruction, and evaluation procedure.

Relevant Features of the Education Law

1. Responsible Authority

The responsible authority has been described in article 11 in Law Number 20/ 2003 on National Education System, Indonesia. It said that "The Government and local governments have to provide services and facilities, and ensure the implementation of quality education for every citizen without discrimination." The government at the national level, the local government, and the regional division of education office have to work collaboratively in this regard. The local education officer in Yogyakarta province said the Ministry of Education gave the policy guideline about IE and each of the provinces implemented these according to their own strategies.

2. Education Provision

In section 1 and article 15 of Indonesian education policy it is said that, "all citizens will get good quality education and the citizen with special needs will receive special education." In the explanation of article 15, the broad scope of inclusive education is recognized in these words: "Special Education is provision of education programs for the disabled and/or the gifted learners, organized inclusively or exclusively at basic and secondary level of schooling."

The majority of the respondents (16 out of 20) supported the current education provision for implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, 10 respondents commented that IE should be one of the provisions for special needs children under general education system, because IE is being implemented in general school, not in special school. In Yogyakarta city, in the course of field visit and classroom observation in three primary schools and two madrasahs, seven student with special needs were found; among them, four were visually impaired and three were hearing impaired.

3. Teacher's Qualification

In Indonesia, according to the law, teachers from the stage of early childhood education to higher education are required to have training in their own teaching field. Moreover,

government regulations (peraturan pemerintah) require that the teachers of all levels and types of education should have a minimum qualification of the bachelor degree (Diploma 4 or S-1) with professional certificate of teaching in their field of teaching. It is a matter to be noticed that according to the law, only the teacher of special education will be required to have training on inclusive education as inclusive education is linked to special education under government policy. Teachers of general education who will be involved in teaching special needs students may not have the opportunity to get training on inclusive education unless there is special training program for them. However, it has been observed that in schools and madrasahs, the head teachers have had the training on inclusive education, who then served as guides to their staff. While interviewing the class teachers, it was found that they depended on resource teachers who come from the nearest special school. This resource teacher is selected by the regional education office and he or she visits inclusive school once in a week and give progress report to the education office.

4. Student's Entrance

In Indonesian education policy, 2003, article 5 in chapter 4 pointed out that: "Citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social deficiencies shall have the right to receive special education."

On the other hand, in chapter 5, article 12, it is also said that "Every student will have right to get into any education unit according to their talent, ability and interest."

According to the first statement special needs children will receive education from special schools, but the second statement implied that children with different abilities including those with special needs could go to any school according to their ability and interest. As the explanation of article 15 indicated, inclusive education as education opportunity is linked with and conceptualized in relation to special education. It appears that the policy is intended to allow some leeway and discretion to local education authorities and parents in deciding where a child should be enrolled and what may serve the "best interest" of the child. In the discussion with the interviewees, it was found that there was a divergence of views about the policy statement as it stood now. Eight out of 20 respondents were in favor of a stronger statement supporting the mainstreaming of children with special needs. The remaining 12 were equally divided between those who agreed with the present formulation and those who were against a strong mainstreaming effort.

5. Curriculum

Law 20/2003 on National Education System, Indonesia, (chapter 10, article 36) laid down the principle that "Curriculum development is conducted on the basis of standard of national education in order to achieve the objectives of national education."

Furthermore, the government regulation required that the content of lessons is appropriate for learners and that the lessons are delivered holistically. Interviews revealed that curriculum development gave importance to identifying competencies to be achieved by

learners and followed the principle maintaining unity, yet allowing for diversity. One respondent observed:

This curriculum allows for provincial and local differences in subject matters as well as for differences in local facilities and students' abilities. To make the most of the curriculum's flexibility, there will be a planned introduction of school-based management concepts and principles. This will allow schools to choose and decide on the best ways to effectively use the available resources in meeting their particular needs, according to policies and priorities.

A majority of the respondents (12 out of 20) expressed the wish for the government regulations (Peraturan Pemerintah) to be more specific and clearer about "simplification and modification" of the curriculum to serve children with special needs in the general school. During class visits, examples of "simplification" was not observed; however, the head teacher said that they tried it in consultation with the resource teacher and the education supervisor.

6. Medium of Instruction

The Indonesian language as national language is the main medium of instruction in the classroom. In the law, chapter 7, article 33, clause 2, said that "Regional language can be applied as medium of instruction in the beginning of education of the learner on the basis of their need."

This is an important provision for Indonesia, a country with great language diversity. Using the local language is a very practical idea for serving diversified students in inclusive education. Again, specific guidelines for special needs student were given. Discussion with the respondents indicated that schools took pragmatic decisions such as the use of the Braille or communication devices for the hearing impaired. Classroom observation showed use of Braille and magnifying glass for visual impairment, but no example of special device for the hearing impaired was seen.

7. Evaluation Procedure

Chapter 16, article 58, clauses 1 & 2 stated that "evaluation will be undertaken to assess continuous improvement of student's performance ... periodically, comprehensively, transparently, systematically and autonomously, by the institution". A degree of discretion and flexibility is exercised at the school level. One comment was:

In Indonesia, national evaluation procedure is SBA (School Based Assessment). Besides, during the exam student with special needs get extra time. We also separate their answer papers [to permit necessary special consideration.].

Appropriate evaluation in an inclusive setting remains an issue which requires balancing the general standard of education and the individual needs and "best interest" of the child with special needs. There is no doubt that a rigid evaluation procedure contributes to drop out from school of children with special needs and varying abilities.

8. Managing IE from Central to Local Level

Managing inclusive schools is a critical issue. Discussion with education officials of the Yogyakarta province provided insight into the management practices followed.

The Ministry of Education of Indonesia established a Directorate of Special Education in 2000 which has the overall responsibility for policy and program design, development of curriculum, the evaluation process, provisions for facilities, and putting in place management and monitoring of special education as well as inclusive education. At the provincial level, education for special needs children is overseen by the Primary Education Division (PED) under the regional office of national education. The PEDs supervise and guide management of the special and inclusive schools. There are altogether more than 600 inclusive schools and 1,129 special schools under the Government of Indonesia (Hadis, 2005). The collaboration of the special teacher with the regular teacher is managed and overseen by education officers and education supervisors of PED of the provinces. Besides, it was found that each PED office has its own plan to implement IE in that province, based on the guideline from Directorate of Special Education and taking into account ethnicity, language, and culture of the province. Education officers in Yogyakarta said that the website of the Ministry of Education was a source of guidelines and messages on inclusive education for them.

V. Discussion and Recommendations

According to the UN Convention (2006), the state parties, that is, the governments, have to take the principal responsibility for implementing the convention.. Besides, the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF) adopted by an inter-governmental body of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP, 2002) mentioned as a target the formulation of plans to ensure the attendance of disabled children in local primary schools. The Ministry of Education accordingly has taken the responsibility for education for special needs in an inclusive and special education environment.

As presented above, the policies and regulations have been formulated, the organizational structures have been established, the tools and methods have been developed and a nationwide effort is underway to fulfill the right to education for all children. They include those with special needs who must have extra care and support, and the gifted, who have to be provided an environment of challenge and creativity.

Act Number 20 of 2003 is a landmark legislation that provides a legal framework for special needs children in the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. The law and regulations based on the law have guided the specification of authority and responsibility, and the development of the competency based curriculum. The law requires the creation of a flexible evaluation procedure, using local languages in the early stage of education, and administration and management of IE with a degree of discretion and pragmatic flexibility at the school and district level.

Relevant Lessons for Bangladesh

In the Education for All Development Index (EDI) of EFA global monitoring report, the ranking in terms of progress towards EFA of Indonesia was 56 compared to 107 for Bangladesh. (GMR, 2009). It may be mentioned that the adoption of a legal framework in Indonesia places it ahead of many developing countries. The absence of such a law and regulations and organizational measures based on the law in Bangladesh is typical of the situation of many other developing countries. Moreover, the lack of resources remains a major barrier to implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh (Ahsan, 2007). Drawing on the experience of Indonesia, ideas and possible initiatives can be suggested for Bangladesh.

- Principles, priorities and key strategies for inclusive education need to be elaborated in the national education policy. The Compulsory Education Act 1990, the present legal basis for primary education provisions, need to be re-examined in the light of IE principles. Part II of Clause 3 of the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990 states that if there is a 'valid ground', a child can be kept out of education activities of a school. Valid ground is often interpreted as any physical disability or even a child's appearance that can be seen as causing difficulty in participating in school activities. A child's limited intellectual abilities as assessed by an education officer is often an excuse for exclusion (Ahsan & Tonmoy, 2002).
- The Ministry of Education should take responsibility of education (both in special institutions and in mainstream schools in an inclusive setting) for special needs children.
- There has to be better collaboration among the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to promote inclusive education and serve children with special needs.
- Positions of special education experts need to be created and people recruited at different levels of education administration from the ministry to the upazilla level.
- Curriculum development, content and implementation need to be looked at from inclusive education and special needs perspectives. It can be said that in the Asia Pacific countries, the existing curricula generally are rigid (both in terms of content and methodology of transaction), which need to be revised and made flexible, meaningful and responsive to needs of all children (Perner and Ahuja, 2004). According to the 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report, one way to move towards a relevant, balanced set of aims is to analyze the curriculum in terms of inclusion.
- Methods, tools and procedures for assessment and identification of children with special needs should be developed and applied in the primary education system.
- Resource Centres for special needs students should be established at the district level.

- Special schools with adequate facilities should be established in each upazilla; these schools and their staff can also support the general schools in implementing the inclusive education approach and engage in collaboration among teachers and staff.
- A database in BANBEIS should be created about special needs students in Bangladesh.
- Regulations, plans and practices about using the local language in pre-primary and primary level, especially for the ethnic communities, should be examined in the light of IE goals and principles.
- Assessment and testing policy, regulations and practices should be looked at taking into consideration the needs of children with special needs and the policy objectives in this respect. The implications of public examinations introduced recently at the end of grade 5 and 8 for inclusive education objectives and practices and to what extent these examinations measure learners' actual achievement of competence should be carefully evaluated.
- A program of increasing awareness about special needs, disabilities and inclusive education principles and educational policies and priorities in this regard should be launched through communications media and advocacy forums.
- A plan for developing human resources in education, including orientation and training of education officers at national and district and upazilla, level should be carried out. Education supervisor and URC officers at local level should have training to monitor and supervise inclusive schools.
- Home-based education program for some children with special needs and how this can be supported through specially trained teachers should be considered (UNICEF, 2003). Mobile training unit, a training team which can go around to remote areas to train teachers, should be considered. This concept has been widely used in the remote areas of Thailand.

VI. Conclusion

The movement toward inclusive education practices can be expected to continue and grow stronger. Various constructive actions can be taken to promote the development of inclusive education. The policy makers need to consider if enough is being done to bring about the transformation and look at their own commitment to this end. One approach to overcome the constraints and resistances is to invest in pilot projects to support individual schools or clusters of schools committing themselves to serve all children in their local areas and implement the inclusive strategies and practices. (William & Jonsson, 2001). Another key action is to initiate changes in teacher education - in pedagogical practices and instructional strategies, as well as teachers' knowledge and understanding about special-needs children. (Porter, 2001).

The Indonesian experience including the measures taken and the struggles that continue in serving children with special needs and articulating the interaction between special needs

and inclusive education provide useful pointers to relevant issues and challenges and ways of coping with them in Bangladesh.

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