

Inclusive learning model in equivalency education Package A equivalent to elementary school: a case study at UPTD SKB Magetan

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Received: December 4, 2024; Revised: January 10, 2025; Accepted: January 30, 2025

Abstract: This study aims to explore the implementation of inclusive teaching models within the context of equivalency education, specifically the Paket A program, which is equivalent to elementary education, at UPTD SKB Magetan. Equivalency education and inclusive education in Indonesia play a crucial role in providing equal opportunities for all individuals, including those with special needs, to access quality education. The differentiated learning model was identified as a relevant approach to meet the diverse learning needs of students, especially in inclusive classrooms. This research employs a qualitative method with a case study design, involving interviews and observations of teachers instructing students with special needs at UPTD SKB Magetan. The results show that the differentiated learning model is implemented by adapting content, processes, and assessments according to students' abilities, interests, and learning styles. Challenges faced in the implementation of this model include time constraints, limited resources, and the need for teacher training. Despite these challenges, the benefits are significant, including increased student engagement, motivation, and achievement for students with special needs. The study concludes that the differentiated learning model is an effective approach in inclusive education, helping to create a more inclusive learning environment that supports the success of all students, including those with special needs.

Keywords: equivalency education, inclusive education, differentiated learning model, students with special needs

How to Cite: Ardy, P.A., & Budiarti, M. (2025). Inclusive learning model in equivalency education Package A equivalent to elementary school: a case study at UPTD SKB Magetan. *At-Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 11(1), 67-72. <https://doi.org/10.55210/attalim.v11i1.1987>

Introduction

Education is one of the fundamental human rights and plays a crucial role in individual and societal development. However, across the world, including in Indonesia, disparities in access and quality of education persist, particularly for disadvantaged communities. Equivalency education has emerged as a solution to address educational inequality, providing equal opportunities for all individuals to receive quality education regardless of their social, economic, or cultural background. Equivalency education is designed to offer a flexible and inclusive learning pathway for those who cannot attend the formal education system, such as workers, homemakers, and individuals with physical or mental limitations. Through programs like Package A, Package B, and Package C, equivalency education aims to enhance students' skills, knowledge, and competitiveness, preparing them to contribute actively to society.

Equivalency education serves as a crucial solution in providing learning opportunities for those unable to participate in formal education. Package A, which is equivalent to elementary education, is one of the equivalency education programs that offer a second chance for individuals to obtain an elementary school-equivalent diploma. However, the implementation of equivalency education faces several challenges, including social stigma associated with learners, limited facilities and resources,

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and insufficient support from the government and society. Additionally, many people lack awareness of the importance of equivalency education, leading to low participation in the program.

Inclusive education is an approach designed to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have equal access to quality education in the same learning environment. This concept is based on the principle that every individual has the right to learn, regardless of their background or condition. Inclusive education does not merely focus on the physical presence of students with special needs in the classroom but also on creating a supportive environment where every student feels accepted, valued, and empowered to contribute (Ainscow, 2005).

In Indonesia, inclusive education has been formally recognized through policies that support educational access for students with special needs. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities are initial steps reflecting the government's commitment to implementing inclusive education. However, significant challenges remain in its implementation. Many educators still lack adequate understanding of inclusive education, and social stigma against students with special needs persists (Buchanan & Kaur, 2015).

Therefore, it is crucial to explore the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia further, including the challenges faced and strategies that can be applied to improve the quality of education for all students.

Inclusive education emphasizes the acceptance and participation of all students, including those with special needs, in the learning process. The use of appropriate learning models is essential to support this goal. Diverse learning models enable teachers to adapt teaching strategies to the unique needs of each student. This flexibility helps create a responsive environment that accommodates individual differences, allowing each student to learn in the most effective way for them. Consequently, inclusive education can be implemented more effectively, ensuring that every student receives the necessary support. Several inclusive learning models include:

a) Cooperative Learning Model

This model encourages students to work together in small groups, facilitating interactions between students with special needs and their peers. This approach helps improve social skills and mutual understanding (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

b) Differentiated Learning Model

This model emphasizes the importance of adapting methods, materials, and assessments based on each student's needs and abilities, ensuring that all students learn in the most effective way for them (Tomlinson, 2001).

c) Project-Based Learning Model

This model engages students in real-life projects relevant to their experiences, fostering collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. It can help students with special needs feel more involved and motivated.

d) Collaborative Learning Model

This model emphasizes cooperation between educators and specialists in designing and implementing inclusive education programs while involving parents and the community to support the learning process (Friend & Cook, 2010).

Although several studies have discussed inclusive and differentiated learning models, limited research specifically examines their application in equivalency education programs, such as in this study at UPTD SKB Magetan. This research is relevant in providing a clearer picture of how the differentiated learning model is implemented in the context of equivalency education for Package A, particularly for students with special needs.

Appropriate learning models are crucial in inclusive education. By implementing various approaches, educators can create a more inclusive environment, support each student's success, and help them reach their full potential. This study aims to explore the implementation of inclusive

learning models within the context of equivalency education, specifically in the Package A program, which is equivalent to elementary education at UPTD SKB Magetan.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore the implementation of the differentiated learning model in inclusive education for students with special needs at UPTD SKB Magetan. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of teaching strategies, challenges faced, and the impact of the learning model on students' development.

The research subjects consist of Package A teachers/tutors who teach students with special needs at UPTD SKB Magetan, as well as one student with special needs who is part of the inclusive class. A purposive sampling technique was used to select subjects based on their involvement in differentiated learning within the inclusive classroom.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the differentiated learning model in inclusive education.

1. In-depth Interviews. Conducted with teachers/tutors who teach students with special needs, focusing on the differentiated learning strategies implemented, challenges in implementation, and evaluation of learning success. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured guide to allow flexibility in exploring deeper insights.
2. Direct Observations. Conducted in the inclusive classroom to directly observe the implementation of the differentiated learning model. The observations cover aspects such as teacher-student interactions, teaching strategies, the use of learning media, and student participation in the learning process.
3. Documentation. The study also collected supporting documents or records such as Lesson Plans (RPP), learning modules, and student evaluation results to validate the findings.

This study consists of three main phases: the preparation phase, the implementation phase, and the data analysis phase. Preparation Phase: The researcher will obtain research permission from UPTD SKB Magetan, develop research instruments such as interview question lists, and validate the instruments. Implementation Phase: This phase involves conducting observations and interviews with teachers/tutors. Data Analysis Phase: The researcher will process and analyze interview data and interpret the findings.

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that qualitative data analysis is conducted interactively and continuously until completion. The data analysis activities consist of the following steps: Data Reduction: Selecting, simplifying, and organizing interview, observation, and documentation data systematically. Data Display: Presenting data in a narrative form to illustrate patterns in the implementation of the differentiated learning model. Conclusion Drawing: Interpreting the data to understand the effectiveness of the differentiated learning model in inclusive education and its implications for students and educators.

Results and Discussion

Based on the case study conducted, it was found that the differentiated learning model is used in teaching students with special needs at UPTD SKB Magetan. According to interviews with Package A teachers/tutors who teach students with special needs, differentiated learning is an instructional approach aimed at meeting the learning needs of all students in different ways. In this model, teachers adjust content, processes, products, and learning environments based on students' abilities, interests,

and learning styles. This approach is highly relevant in the context of inclusive education, where students have diverse abilities and needs.

Interview Results with Teachers/Tutors

- Question 1 : How do you implement differentiated learning in your classroom?
Answer : In the inclusive classroom, I always try to recognize each student's needs. For students with special needs, I adapt my teaching methods using various aids, such as pictures, videos, and educational games. For example, for students with hearing impairments, I use sign language and clear visual materials.
- Question 2 : What challenges do you face in implementing differentiated learning?
Answer : The biggest challenges are time and resources. Sometimes, it is difficult to find suitable materials for each individual. Additionally, there is a challenge in maintaining the attention of other students when I focus on children with special needs.
- Question 3 : How do you assess the progress of students with special needs?
Answer : I use a variety of assessment methods. Besides formal tests, I also conduct observations and assign practical tasks that allow them to demonstrate their understanding. For example, I give group projects where they can contribute according to their abilities.
- Question 4 : What are your hopes for these children in the future?
Answer : I hope that every child, regardless of their needs, can reach their full potential. I want them to feel confident and motivated to learn. With the right support, I believe they can achieve success both in school and in daily life.

The interview results reflect how teachers adapt to the specific needs of students with special needs within the context of differentiated learning. The following are the steps teachers take to implement differentiated learning for students with special needs:

1. **Assessment:** The first step is to assess each student's needs, interests, and learning styles. This can be done through observation, interviews, or initial tests.
2. **Lesson Planning:** Teachers need to design lesson plans that can be adjusted based on students' needs. For example, they plan multiple activities for a single topic that can be accessed by students with different abilities.
3. **Use of Technology:** Utilizing technology in learning can support differentiation. For instance, adaptive educational software can adjust the difficulty level based on students' progress.
4. **Collaboration:** Encouraging cooperation among students with different abilities can enrich the learning experience. Advanced students can help their classmates while also learning from them.

Benefits of Differentiated Learning in Inclusive Education

Based on interviews with teachers/tutors, the implementation of differentiated instruction in inclusive education provides various benefits for students with special needs as well as for other students. This model not only helps students understand learning materials according to their abilities but also fosters a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. The following are some key benefits of differentiated instruction in the context of inclusive education:

1. **Enhancing Student Engagement and Motivation.** Differentiated instruction allows students to learn through approaches that align with their learning styles, whether visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or a combination of multiple methods. With a tailored approach, students become more actively engaged in the learning process and feel motivated to explore the material further.

This motivation arises because students feel valued and experience a more personalized and relevant learning journey.

2. **Optimizing Student Potential.** Every student has a different level of understanding and learning pace. Differentiated instruction provides space for students to develop according to their own capacities without feeling burdened by a uniform learning standard. Students who grasp concepts more quickly can be given more challenging tasks, while those who need additional support receive appropriate assistance, ensuring that learning is effective and no student is left behind.
3. **Boosting Student Confidence and Independence.** When students can comprehend and complete assignments in ways that suit them best, they gain more confidence in their learning abilities. Through differentiation, students can demonstrate their understanding in various ways, such as through projects, presentations, or practical demonstrations, rather than being limited to written tests. This approach helps them feel more appreciated and encourages them to participate more actively in class.
4. **Creating an Inclusive and Collaborative Learning Environment.** The implementation of differentiated instruction not only benefits students with special needs but also increases awareness and empathy among all students in an inclusive learning environment. Teachers foster a supportive atmosphere that encourages collaboration among students with different levels of ability, allowing them to help and learn from one another. This interaction promotes a culture of inclusivity that values diversity and strengthens students' sense of empathy.
5. **Improving Learning Effectiveness for Both Teachers and Students.** By understanding students' specific needs, teachers can design more targeted and efficient instructional strategies. Differentiation in learning allows teachers to implement flexible teaching methods, such as project-based learning, adaptive technology, or student grouping based on their comprehension levels. As a result, the learning process becomes more dynamic and yields better outcomes for all students.

Overall, the implementation of differentiated instruction in inclusive education has a significant positive impact. By ensuring that every student has access to learning opportunities tailored to their needs, the education system can become more inclusive, effective, and capable of creating meaningful learning experiences for all learners.

Challenges in Implementing Differentiated Learning

Despite its many benefits, this study also identified several challenges faced by teachers, including:

1. **Limited Time and Resources:** Teachers need to prepare various materials and teaching strategies tailored to each student's needs, requiring additional time and effort.
2. **Lack of Training and Support:** Not all teachers receive adequate training to implement differentiated learning optimally. Further training is needed to enhance teachers' understanding of more effective differentiation strategies.
3. **Limited Facilities and Technology:** Resources such as specialized textbooks, assistive technology, and learning tools remain scarce, requiring teachers to find alternatives to ensure smooth learning processes.

The case study findings indicate that the differentiated learning model is an effective strategy for supporting students with special needs at UPTD SKB Magetan. By adjusting content, processes, products, and learning environments, teachers can create a more inclusive and meaningful learning experience. Although challenges exist in its implementation, the benefits outweigh them. Therefore, further support is needed in the form of teacher training, the provision of learning resources, and

educational policies that promote differentiated learning to ensure optimal implementation of inclusive education.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted at UPTD SKB Magetan regarding the implementation of differentiated instruction in the equivalency education program (Paket A) for students with special needs, it can be concluded that differentiated instruction is an effective approach in creating an inclusive learning environment. This instructional model, which involves adjustments to content, processes, products, and the learning environment, caters to the diverse needs of students in a more individualized and adaptive manner.

In this approach, teachers strive to recognize and adjust teaching methods based on students' abilities, interests, and learning styles by utilizing various teaching aids such as images, videos, and technology to support the understanding of students with special needs. Differentiated instruction offers numerous benefits, including enhancing student engagement, motivation, and achievement while fostering a more positive and inclusive learning atmosphere. By implementing individualized adaptations, students feel more accepted and empowered to develop their potential. Moreover, this model enables students with special needs to collaborate with their peers who have different abilities, enriching the learning experience for all students.

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