

# Assessment of Learning Outcomes of Children with Special Needs in Vocational Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents an assessment analysis of the learning outcomes of students with special needs in vocational schools. The limitations of teachers in using test instruments in learning assessments have an impact on the weak feedback on improving learning programs received by students with special needs. This study used a descriptive study method at vocational schools of SMK Negeri 1 and SMK Karsa Mulya Palangka Raya, Indonesia. The study results revealed that teachers in this vocational school had yet to use the category of children with special needs of light, medium, and severe in assessing the learning outcomes of students with special needs. The assessment is based only on the minimum standards set by the school. Then, the assessment pattern given by the teacher based on the minimum completion criteria makes the teacher's responsibility less than optimal in evaluating the learning outcomes of students with special needs, which is characterized by the lack of use of test instruments as an objective measuring tool in formative assessment.

**Keywords:** learning outcomes; children with special needs, vocational schools.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important elements in implementing learning in inclusive schools is the assessment of learning outcomes (Pratiwi, 2012). Furthermore, assessment activities provide more than just questions to students after the material is given. However, assessment activities also include students' achievement in the material, often used in determining the value of students' abilities and even as a determination in class increases.

In an inclusive education setting, the assessment of learning outcomes systematically and sustainably aims to assess student learning outcomes in schools, account for the implementation of education in the community, and determine the quality of education in schools (Sukinah, n.d.). The use of positive assessment strategies and instruments in accordance with the concept of assessing learning outcomes in inclusive settings such as observation, portfolio, and performance. In determining the completion of learning (mastery learning) or graduation competency standards for each student, it is necessary to have several learning completion standards. The learning completion system is adjusted to the situation and conditions of the school as well as the readiness of teachers to assess learning outcomes in inclusive education settings.

The assessment of the learning outcomes of vocational schools such as Vocational High Schools (SMK) has unique characteristics. The learning process at SMK will become very distinctive because learning applies theory or concepts to practice (Fatimah, 2018). In other words, vocational learners must have proficiencies, including theoretical knowledge, visual skills,

construction, interpersonal relationships, as well as ethical and aesthetic assessments. Moreover, theoretical knowledge and practical skills must go hand in hand (Inglar, 2014).

In several previous studies, the problem of numeracy can be solved by learning media. Good media in learning influences increased numeracy skills. One media that can be chosen is the media of ice cream sticks. According to Sari (2016), learning mathematics using ice cream stick media in grade IV SD can increase student learning activities. In addition, playing with sticks can help improve students' initial numeracy skills (Fariyah, 2017). The numeracy skills include giving names, sorting, pairing, and adding up symbols and objects between 1-10. Suaeni (2022) added that the application of number stick media in learning could help teachers improve the ability to add arithmetic to Deaf students.

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The ability to count can be increased if the ice cream stick media is repeated. Addition and subtraction using ice cream stick media can positively impact students. Students are happier and have an increased interest in participating in mathematics learning. This ice cream stick media is a medium that is easy to get and often used by students to play.

Numeracy skill is one of the most critical abilities for children. So the use of learning media is essential to solving problems for one deaf student in class IV Special School in Malang Regency. Based on the preceding, this study aims to see changes in the numeracy skills of deaf students at Malang Special Primary School in learning mathematics using ice cream stick media.

One of the most important elements in implementing learning in inclusive schools is the assessment of learning outcomes (Pratiwi, 2012). Furthermore, assessment activities provide more than just questions to students after the material is given. However, assessment activities also include students' achievement in the material, which is often used in determining the value of students' abilities and even as a determination in class increases.

Teacher attitudes are among the most critical factors in implementing inclusive education (Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2018). Teachers have a very strategic role in assessing learning outcomes in this case. Teacher intervention in assessing the behavior of students with special needs is urgently needed in inclusive schools (Walker, Chung, & Bonnet, 2018). Nevertheless, the teacher's task in providing assessments to special-needs students is challenging. Many obstacles are experienced by teachers, especially teachers who have never attended training (Sánchez, Rodríguez, Maldonado, & Martínez, 2019). Therefore, identifying key challenges and approaches to encouraging school connectedness with students with special needs is essential (Page, Charteris, Anderson, & Boyle, 2021) so the learning and assessment process can run well.

The teacher's task in assessing the learning outcomes of students with special needs is a particular approach. One of the things that need to be done is to help students to be ready and able to form friendships with peers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It gives them valuable experiences and skills they can bring to educational environments, communities, and new places (Nishina, Lewis, Bellmore, & Witkow, 2019).

In addition, the personality factor of the teacher in the learning process for students with special needs is also essential to pay attention to learning. For example, teacher self-efficacy plays a key role in the success of inclusive learning in public schools (Wilson, Woolfson, & Durkin, 2020). The teacher's confidence in teaching and guiding students with special needs is very necessary. If the teacher is convinced that he is incapable of guiding

students with special needs, then the teacher has succeeded in the learning process. Therefore, teachers' professional personalities and intentions regarding inclusive teaching are considered essential prerequisites for a thriving learning environment (Hellmich, Loper, & Orel, 2019).

Another factor that needs to be considered by teachers in learning in inclusive schools is the establishment of dialogue between teachers and students learning (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). The teacher will understand and explore the students' learning difficulties through good dialogue. On the contrary, students will feel cared for and open to the learning difficulties experienced. In addition to establishing a dialogue with students, teachers must also build a good dialogue with parents of students with special needs. This dialogue with parents is important for teachers, especially in collecting information about students' personalities and learning difficulties. Moreover, the assumption from parents that children with disabilities strongly agree to have the right to inclusive education (Stevens & Wurf, 2020). For this reason, the role and responsibility of teachers professionally are highly expected in inclusive education.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The current study used a descriptive method in a vocational school in Palangka Raya, Indonesia. Researchers took data from two vocational high schools, namely one public school and one private school that has students of Children with Special Needs and has graduated students of Children with Special Needs. The two schools are SMK Negeri 1 Palangka Raya and SMK Karsa Mulya Palangka Raya, Indonesia. Data collection through in-depth interviews with one of the teachers from each of these schools. Informants selected on a regular basis are senior teachers or teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience in the school. Question indicators related to the learning outcomes assessment system in students with special needs in the last five years. The results of the interview data were then analyzed with Bloom's theory of learning outcomes applied to inclusive education.

## RESULTS

The following data were obtained based on the results of interviews with teachers of SMK Negeri 1 Palangka Raya. This school has graduated four special-needs students in the last five years. Of the four students, one student is included in the category of medium Special Needs (SEN), and one is a heavy SEN. The rest of the students are in the light SEN category. The grading system follows the general/regular assessment curriculum, passing with the minimum grade standards

set by the school. Teachers in this school do not use and consider an assessment of learning outcomes by category because teachers have difficulty providing learning and mentoring to students with special needs. This condition occurs because students with special needs are never silent during the classroom learning process. It is even more often in and out of the classroom that makes the learning process is disrupted. This condition makes teachers not optimal in guiding students with special needs. At the same time, the teacher must also give lessons to the students as a whole in the classroom. For this reason, the assessment of student learning outcomes of children with special needs based on school policies is based on minimum completion criteria.

Second, teachers do not use special assessment instruments in the assessment of learning outcomes in SEN students. As a result, formative assessment as feedback on student learning outcomes in children with special needs was never carried out. Whether it is an assessment in the form of an objective test such as multiple choice or short fill or a description test has never been given to students with special needs. It is because the condition of students with special needs does not allow them to work on such tests.

Generally, teachers only observe or observe as a whole, without observation sheets that are compiled and worked out systematically. In other words, aspects have not used instruments or measuring instruments that can professionally account for cognitive, affective, or psychomotor aspects. From the interview results, the assessment of the learning outcomes of students with needs was given on humanitarian grounds. The passing grade standard is based on the school's minimum passing criteria. So, teachers in giving assessments to students with special needs only refer to the school's policy.

Then, the results of an interview with a teacher at SMK Karsa Mulya Palangka Raya show that two students with special needs have graduated in the last five years. Both students fall into the category of light SEN. In terms of assessment, teachers follow a general/regular curriculum assessment system. However, the assessment of the learning outcomes of SEN students is still based on the Minimum Completion Criteria set by the school. This school also does not have special teachers who are professional in handling and teaching students with special needs.

Formative assessment instruments for students with special needs have yet to be used objectively. Assessment instruments do not use test forms such as multiple-choice questions or descriptions. However, teachers generally use observation only in general. In other words, teachers in this school have yet to use valid instruments to measure the learning progress of students with special needs. The assessment of learning outcomes is based solely on the

minimum school completion.

## DISCUSSIONS

Research data from the two vocational high schools, namely SMK Negeri 1 and SMK Karsa Mulya, Palangka Raya City, show that teachers are not ready to handle students professionally with special needs. This condition is a challenge and an obstacle in objectively measuring student learning outcomes. Meanwhile, according to Krathwohl & Masia (1964), the assessment of learning outcomes must be carried out objectively, which concerns cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In vocational schools such as SMK, learning outcomes are shown by students' success in practicing the theory learned. Therefore, success between theory and practice will simultaneously strengthen all aspects of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning outcomes. This result is in line with Fatimah (2018) that the learning process at SMK is very distinctive because learning applies theory or concepts to practice.

In this regard, the teacher has a noble role and responsibility in successfully teaching students with special needs. Support for teacher duties and responsibilities, training, and competency improvement are needed for teachers dealing with students with special needs (Sánchez et al., 2019). Especially the teacher's ability to process test instruments for special-needs students. In addition, teachers should be able to consider using thematic, activity-based, experience-based, and community reference lesson formats to facilitate the participation and learning of students with disabilities (Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 2018). Finally, measuring the learning progress of students with special needs is important.

Second, teachers in these two vocational high schools still need to maximize the test instruments in assessing the learning outcomes of students with special needs. Meanwhile, the demands of professional teachers expect teachers to be able to use test instruments and non-tests in assessing the learning outcomes of students with special needs, as confirmed by Hellmich et al. (2019). Finally, the professional personality of teachers regarding inclusive teaching is considered an essential prerequisite for a thriving learning environment, especially in using learning outcomes test instruments.

One form of maximizing test instruments in the assessment of learning outcomes of students with special needs is formative assessment. Through formative assessment, it allows students to achieve learning outcomes that match their abilities and realize that they bear some responsibility for their learning (Zoks, 2017). In this case, the teacher in the formative assessment needs to choose a test instrument that matches the condition of

students with special needs. Whether in an objective test, oral, description, action test, or another non-test form. For this reason, practitioners' roles can potentially improve inclusive learning outcomes for students with disabilities (Maciver et al., 2018).

Regarding the ability of teachers to use various test instruments for students with special needs, further training is needed. The teacher's ability to use effective test instruments will be formed with training. The assessment of learning outcomes becomes non-objective and cannot be accounted for professionally. Moreover, training in improving the ability of teachers to provide assessments based on the categories of children with special needs is very necessary. In addition, the role of the principal is needed to provide opportunities for teachers to attend training.

In addition, creating inclusive schools for students with disabilities is a crucial leadership responsibility for principals worldwide. Every national, regional, and local context is different, but every principal can help create and support inclusive schools (DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey, & Sharma, 2020). Therefore, teachers need to improve their professional ability to teach students with special needs, as well as the ability to use various test instruments that are suitable and effective for students with special needs.

## CONCLUSION

The assessment of learning outcomes for students with special needs at vocational schools SMK Negeri 1 and SMK Karsa Mulya Palangka Raya can be described as follows: first, teachers in providing assessments of learning outcomes have not used assessment standards based on the categories of light SEN, medium SEN, and heavy SEN. The reason for not using the assessment standards based on the SEN category is because of the limited number of teachers dealing with children with special needs. Then these two vocational schools still need teachers who have special abilities in handling children with special needs. The assessment of the learning outcomes of children with special needs in these two vocational schools is based on the minimum completion criteria standards. In other words, students with special needs graduate with minimal completion scores.

Second, teachers in these two vocational schools have the same pattern of providing assessments of learning outcomes to students with special needs. The pattern is that the assessment is based on the minimum completion criteria set by the two schools. This assessment pattern makes teachers less than optimal in using various test instruments in formative assessment. As a result, learning outcomes become objectively

immeasurable. Instead, learning outcomes become predominantly subjective. For this reason, this study suggests that teachers in vocational schools need to develop professional skills by attending training, especially in handling and providing assessments of the learning outcomes of students with special needs. So that students with special needs get objective and fair grades.

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