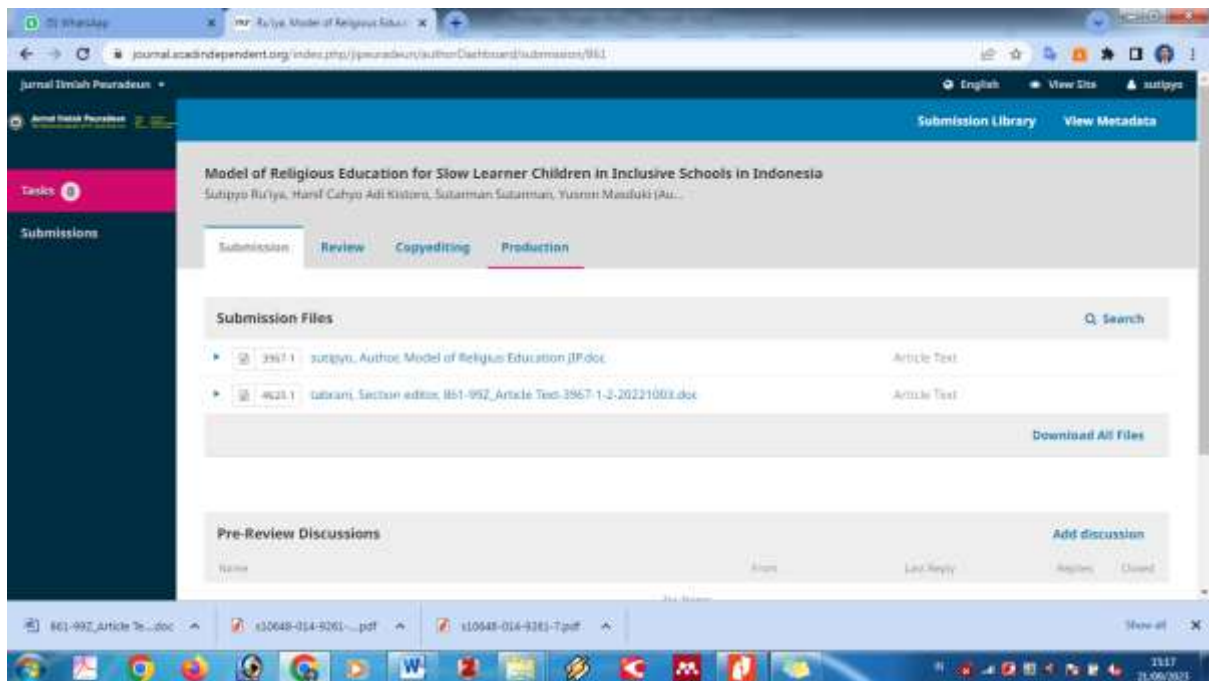


# BUKTI KORESPONDENSI ARTIKEL JURNAL



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## MODEL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR SLOW LEARNER CHILDREN IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

*Education is a need for everyone, including children with special needs. This study aims to capture the implementation of learning strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers to educate slow learner children at inclusive schools in Yogyakarta. This research is qualitative research using a narrative approach, with data sources consisting of eight Islamic Religious Education teachers and principals from two schools in Yogyakarta. Data obtained through in-depth interviews from eight data sources then analyzed through several stages. The stages of data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The results showed that the learning strategies applied by Islamic Religious Education teachers included peer teaching and repetition in simple language. The teacher empowered students who have comprehended the material to participate in teaching friends who fell behind (slow learner). The teacher also repeated the material in a more accessible and more straightforward language until the slow learner child could understand. Obstacles in the learning process for slow learner children were caused by two things: students' ability and concentration and the negative perception of parents about children with special needs. This study's results are expected to be a simple guide for teachers, schools, and parents.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive schools, Peer teaching, Repetition, Slow learner.*

## **A. Introduction**

Inclusive schools constitute the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 70 of 2009. This ministerial regulation is an appreciation of students' diversity to which educational institutions must respond positively without discrimination. Inclusive schools are traditional schools that carry out joint learning between children with special needs (ABK) and typical children in one room (Pratiwi, 2015). Carrying out the learning activity over a diverse range of students certainly requires more skills and competence, especially for dealing with slow learner children. Slow learner (SL) children have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal counterparts, so they usually need a longer learning time (Tarnoto, 2016).

Meanwhile, it has been clearly stated in the law that the purpose of education is to make students to be a faithful believers, pious, and to have good morals. Religious education thus, to achieve the goals of national education, is a primary requirement that must be obtained by every child, including children with special needs (Suyudi & Prakasa, 2020). There are many aspects need to be considered in the learning process to achieve the desired competencies. The first consideration is the competence one wants to achieve. The competencies that slow learner children must complete in each subject are usually lowered slightly below those for normal children. The teachers do this because slow learners have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal peers.

Gary R. VandenBos, in the dictionary of the American Psychological Association (APA), defines a slow learner as a child who has intelligence below the average of normal children (VandenBos, 2007). Eman Gaad added that slow learner children are those who have slow learning ability due to minor mental retardation (Gaad, 2011). Boeriswati refers to slow learner children who are usually with mild cognitive impairment, so unable to learn in general (Boeriswati, 2017). Another definition of a slow learner is a child who learns slowly in pace so that he or she is unsuccessful as he or she is lack of psychological and cognitive

abilities. Slow learners are students who are slow to learn, so they take longer time compared to other counterparts with average intelligence (Amelia, 2016), except for children with intellectual disability (Hadi, 2016), so that children with these characteristics are still eligible to study along with other normal children, of course with special treatment.

John H. Peatling states, according to the IQ level, slow learner children are divided into two groups: retarded (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 67 to 89) and sub-normal (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 90 to 100) (Peatling, 1975). On the other hand, Cooter says that slow learner children's characteristics in terms of intelligence, as presented by IQ measurement tool, usually range from 70 to 85 (Cooter & Cooter, 2014). The same is said by Endry Boeriswati that slow learner children usually have an IQ range of 70-90. Chauhan also said that the IQ range of slow learner children is in the range of 80-90 (Chauhan, 2011).

Considering the condition of slow learner children with the above characteristics, inclusive learning carried out on slow learner children certainly requires a unique strategy so that learning can be successfully achieved (Ru'iyah dkk., 2021). Learning strategies are a whole series of activities teachers and students must carry out carefully (Chatib, 2014). J.R David states that learning strategies include planning, methods, or activity designed in such a way as to achieve learning objectives (Majid, 2012).

As stated in the rules for learning implementation in inclusive schools, learning activities are carried out by subject teachers along with special guidance teachers (GPK) (Zakia, 2015). Special guidance teachers are those responsible for conducting inclusive schools, thus they have such a significant role. These special tutors are responsible for designing and implementing the specialized programs.

Meanwhile, Islamic Religious Education is an integral part of the national curriculum that must be implemented for slow learner children. The implementation of Islamic Religious Education must, of course, be carried out by teachers who are competent in their fields. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education in inclusive schools are indeed obliged to

collaborate with special guidance teachers so that the implementation of learning in inclusive schools can run well. Therefore, conducting a collaborative study on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies between Islamic Religious Education teachers and special guidance teachers in inclusive schools is a new interesting thing since it is rarely done by researchers.

### **1. Research Problems**

The problems faced by inclusive schools in providing learning to slow learner students or children are unquestionably very diverse. Starting from the learning strategy applied, the materials to be delivered, up to the special assistance, to strengthen the understanding and achievement of the desired learning targets.

### **2. Research Question**

Based on the above conditions and problems hence this study seeks to answer research questions about what learning model that teachers do to slow learner children in the inclusive schools. Also, we will further explain about what constraints and obstacles dealt by teachers during the learning process of slow learner children in inclusive schools.

### **3. Research Focus**

This research will focus more on discussing the experiences of PAI teachers and special guidance teachers in implementing learning in inclusive schools. It will also focus on the teacher's problems in the learning process and how to solve them.

## **B. Method**

### **1. General Background**

This research is a qualitative research with a narrative. It aims to reveal the experiences and events faced by teachers and school principals in implementing religious learning for slow learner children in inclusive schools at the primary education level. In addition to conducting and

explaining the implementation of learning activities, it will also disclose the problems and obstacles schools and teachers dealt with in implementing learning. This research was conducted for five months, starting from September 2020 to January 2021.

## **2. Respondents**

The main subjects in this study were teachers and principals from two schools in the Yogyakarta region of Indonesia. The selection of subjects with the provision of religious teachers who already have at least five years of teaching experience becomes a special criterion that has been predetermined by researchers. This is intended to obtain more in-depth information and experience from the research subjects. There were eight respondents in this study, consisting of four (4) religious teachers and two (2) special guidance teachers, and two (2) principals. The respondent's identity and the school in this study were given initials to maintain the confidentiality and comfort of the respondent.

Table 1 Respondent profile

School	PAI teacher	Special guidance teacher	School Principal	Total
Primary School P	2			2
		1		1
			1	1
Primary School G	2			2
		1		1
			1	1
Total				8

## **3. Instruments and Procedures**

Data in this study was obtained from in-depth interviews by means of interview instruments. Data collection during the pandemic period was carried out after obtaining permission from the principals and teachers, as the potential respondents. Following the policy at the time of

the pandemic, interviews were carried out in accordance with the health protocols, namely by conducting interviews at schools by maintaining the distance, wearing masks, and other procedures. Interviews were conducted for 30 to 45 minutes according to the respondent's agreement.

#### **4. Data analysis**

Data reduction based on participants' experiences is an essential part of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Several stages are performed to obtain high-quality data, namely classifying crucial statements in the central theme and describing the meaning of the phenomenon's experience as a whole. The essence of the description is what is being experienced and how the individual is dealing with this experience (Cahyo Adi Kistoro dkk., 2021).

The data analysis procedure in this study started by converting the voice recordings from the interview into a transcript to quickly and easily check the various information contained. The researchers carefully read the interview transcripts several times. Along with this process, the researcher also selected important information contained in it as important statements. The important statements identified by researchers are further grouped into central themes. These important statements and central themes were then used to create a texture description, which is a description of what the participants were going through. The researchers also used those important statements and central themes to create structural description, namely a description of how participants experienced the phenomenon. The final step in this data analysis procedure was writing down the essence of all the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Essence description is a combination of textural and structural descriptions that reveal the nature of the phenomena the participant went through (Creswell, 2014).



## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **1. Result**

#### **a. Assessment for Slow Learner children**

Learning in inclusive school begins with assessment from the beginning of the child's admission to school (Wati, 2014). This assessment aims to find out if the child attending the school has specificity or not. If an incoming child is known to have specificity, then the school will continue with the next assessment that is to determine the level of specificity. For example, if a child attending the school is identified to have a specificity in the field of hearing, then the school must conduct a more in-depth assessment of the level of hearing deficiency. Similarly, for children with visual impairment (blind), the school needs to carry out an assessment of the level of blindness.

Particularly for slow learner children, it is more difficult for school to detect them from the beginning since there are no specific physical signs, except for parents who brought the IQ test results. Those that have been identified to have slow learner specificities get immediate handling from the start. However, for them, there is no initial data assessment carried out during the learning process.

The assessment process was carried out on children who were indicated as slow learner children with the following characteristics: 1) having difficulty in understanding abstract concepts; 2) having limited vocabulary skills; 3) having low learning motivation; 4) requiring more extended understanding of the material, and 5) requiring repetition during material delivery [7]. Children with these characteristics were then subjected to an IQ test as the primary benchmark for determining their cognitive abilities. If the child is classified as a slow learner, the IQ test results will receive special treatment.

This assessment process was in accordance with a narrative from one of the school principals who stated that, "*Just like other children in general, parents enroll their children in school. If the prospective students already show the signs of children with special needs, then an assessment is immediately carried out. However, especially for slow learner children, those signs are often*

*invisible because the children are physically normal. Meanwhile, students enroll in this school are based on their age, or they do not have to take a test. Therefore, the school cannot confirm from the start whether a child is classified as normal or a child with special needs (slow learner)."*

As a result, schools are often overwhelmed after several months of implementing learning activities as, in certain classes, the number of children with special needs (slow learner) exceeds the maximum number stated in the implementation regulation for inclusive schools (Fernandes, 2018). When this happens, the slow learner children in certain classes will be moved to another class so as not to violate the rules.

The initial assessment process at these two schools involved special guidance teachers so as not to misdiagnose the determination of children with special needs. As stated by the school: *"We have special guidance teachers to conduct assessments and assist children in class during the learning process. There are three special guidance teachers scheduled alternately to enter the classroom. In addition, the school provides a particular space for children with special needs. When slow learner students are no longer able to participate in a class learning at all, they are moved to that particular room to be specially assisted"*.

### **b. Learning planning**

The learning planning for each subject in inclusive schools involves special tutors who have more competence in children with special needs (Kadir, 2015). Likewise, the lesson planning for Islamic Religious Education subjects also involves special guidance teachers. In the process of preparing the learning plan, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers focus more on the content/learning material for normal children, while the content/subject matter for children with special needs is relatively the same.

This learning plan is in tune with the description of one of the PAI teachers who stated that *"In the case of Islamic Religious Education material, the Special Guidance Teachers do not interfere and do not dare to make any modification. In contrast to the thematic material, the Special Guidance Teachers*

*is still able to make changes; for example, when determining competencies from analyzing to being familiar with. So there is a decrease of competency grade to be achieved. It is different with the subject of Islamic Religious Education; in which the Special Guidance Teachers only give advice or recommendation, so the determination of competence and material is purely come from me. "*

In the process of preparing the learning implementation plan, Special Guidance Teachers focus more on the learning method. These special tutors always take the cognitive abilities of slow learner students into their consideration, so that they can set up active learning methods and involve all children. Another learning method proposed by the Special Guidance Teacher is peer teaching, where the normal students can actively participate in being a mentor for slow learner peers.

One lesson plan was implemented by PAI teachers together with Special Guidance Teachers in inclusive classes. What distinguished the learning between normal children and slow learner children was in the implementation stage, in which slow learner children were given with more attention than their normal peers and at the time of evaluation the level of acquisition for slow learner children was slightly lowered compared to normal children (Kistoro, 2021). For example, the passing score of 75 for normal children 75, hence a score of 65 for slow learner children considered a pass.

### **c. Implementation of learning**

The implementation of inclusive class learning in these schools used a full inclusive class, where children with special needs learned together with other normal children throughout the day in regular classes using the same curriculum (Elisa & Wrastari, 2013). Therefore, as mentioned in the previous section, the Learning Implementation Plan applies to all children in the inclusive class.

Teachers who conducted learning in the inclusive class consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and Special Guidance Teachers who focused more on slow learner children. However, due to the limited number of Special Guidance Teachers, not every PAI lesson was

always accompanied by a Special Guidance Teacher. A PAI teacher said this, "At the time of the implementation, I taught in front of the class by delivering material. Meanwhile, the special tutor was at the back of the class ready to assist the children with special needs. "

In addition to carrying out the learning process along with the subject teachers, Special Guiding Teachers also give treatment for students from other classes who experience obstacles while learning. For example, when a slow learner student screams in class and does not want to be silent, the teacher blocks the child by taking him to a particular room to be handled by the Special Assistance Teacher. This was in accordance with a narrative by one of the special guidance teachers who explained that, *"When a child with special needs is acting up, a special guidance teacher will handle him or her. However, if the special guidance teacher is not in the classroom, the child with special needs keeps screaming and disturbing his or her classmates. As a consequence, we often isolate them in a particular room where a special guidance teacher can handle them"*.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning is basically the same as the learning implementation of other subjects. Religious teachers are sometimes accompanied by Special Guidance Teachers or sometimes alone in inclusive classes. At the time of observation, the teacher started the lesson by chanting prayers to begin the learning activity together; then, the teacher asked one of the students to read the pledge to keep the discipline and obey the rules, which then other students repeat.

Then the teacher presented the material with a small lecture and asked the students to open their respective books. In certain sections, the teacher asked one of the students to read on a specific page. And then, the teacher asked some questions to students to measure whether the material had been mastered or not.

PAI teachers provided equal opportunities between normal children and slow learner children. However, at the first questions, there are usually no or only few slow learner children could answer. Then the teacher repeated the material by presenting them in students' mother

tongue, by using Javanese language that allowed for slow learner children to understand better.

Interviews with the PAI teachers also confirmed it. One of them stated, *"Children with special needs often find it difficult to grasp the material directly, so teachers are required to be creative. Sometimes, explaining the material in verbal is not enough, so I show them films, or use gestures; I also make the language more accessible, like using my mother tongue or Javanese. So, I just can't keep talking in front of the class since children with special needs cannot receive the material well."*

Another teacher said, *"I often have the children in the class to do warm up before the lesson begins; I give them ice breaking to let them be refreshed so that they can regain their focus. I also often use video shows, gestures, give examples, and then continue."*

The PAI teachers also several times asked normal students who sat side by side with slow learner students to answer questions so that the SL child could hear their friend's answer. The teacher also gave the opportunity to a fellow junior high school student to repeat some of the material he had delivered (repetition). A teacher shared this strategy. *"If someone still does not understand, he or she can ask questions, then I will explain again. I also often use peer learning, so a friend who sits next to him or her can answer some of the questions I give. Sometimes I also ask the student who sits next to the slow learner to repeat material I have delivered so that the Slow Learner child can accept and understand. It's probably because they have the same peer language level."*

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, learning activities take place by using media for communication, owned by all parents. The use of Android phones is a main medium. As one of the teachers stated, *"For online learning, I use WA, Youtube, Google form. During this COVID period, I do not use a particular learning strategy, Sir, for I'm afraid that it will be too burdensome. Since other learning materials pose a lot of assignments, that will be too stressful for the students. During this period of time, I sort out the most important materials to teach. When I give them assignment, for example, I give them time to submit until 7 p.m. Some students completed the task, some others*

did not. Still, we try to understand them. And then, I had a discussion with the special guidance teacher about any slow learner students who hadn't done their assignments. The special guidance teacher made a video call and paid home visits to provide service to students with special needs (slow learners), since only those special tutors who get permission to conduct home visits. "

If the PAI learning process is carried out together with a special guidance teacher, that special tutor will give guidance or assist the slow learner students, those who are mostly having difficulty to concentrate. Slow learner students usually also have other abnormalities, such as hyperactivity, making them difficult to control during the class. This is the time for the function of a special guidance teachers while accompanying PAI learning in inclusive classes. It is in accordance with the guidelines of organizing inclusive schools, in which the special guidance teachers must have the following competencies: 1) general ability, namely an ability required to educate learners in general (normal children); 2) basic ability, i.e. an ability required to educate students with special needs; and 3) specific ability, namely an ability required to educate students with certain types of special needs (specialized).

The PAI and GPK teachers always pay more attention to slow learner students during and throughout the learning process. This is very important because slow learner children have a lower ability to understand lessons than normal children. Slow learner children also need more motivation compared to their normal counterparts, so PAI and GPK teachers need something more to motivate or inspire them. As addressed by one of the teachers: *"The way to assist children with special needs is to make them get interested when they start the class, make them focus on the subjects the class teacher will teach. The Special Guidance Teacher will re-explain the material that the classroom teacher had taught in an easier and understandable language for students and provide concrete examples"*.

The teacher needs to give an understanding to other normal students in advance, for they will give more attention to the SL children, hence to reduce any jealousy. The teacher has to explain that the purpose of learning in the class is so that all students can understand the material.

Therefore, if any student already understands, they should be able to teach their friends who fell behind, and must be patient if they still haven't understood. However, if the classroom learning hours are up, and the slow learner children have not yet learned the subject matter, the PAI teacher and GPK will conduct special/remedial lessons for the slow learner children.

#### **d. Learning evaluation**

Learning evaluation is a tool to determine whether a lesson's planned competence has been achieved or not (Widyawati, 2017). Evaluation is highly essential in the educational process. Evaluation is a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data obtained.

Evaluation of inclusive classes in this school was also performed together with the same questions between regular students and slow learner students. The difference is that the minimum achievement criteria (KKM) for slow learner students are lower than for normal children. For Islamic Religious Education subject, KKM for normal children was 75, while KKM for slow learner children was 70. With this decision, the achievement value of Islamic Education subject in inclusive class could be maximally achieved and all students passed the criteria.

One of the teachers said, *"I do not demand a high standard for slow learner students regarding the problem of mastering material cognitively. I'm pursuing more into real practice. For example: Have the students obediently and orderly done the five-time prayer or not? For recitation material, if students with special needs are able to read and have the correct pronunciation, it can be categorized as good. The exam questions are the same for the normal students and students with special needs. However, the grade is lowered for those with special needs. It's goodly enough if they understand one or some materials, since it is too difficult for them to understand all the materials. I also differentiate the score for normal and students with special needs, for instance, scores of 65-70 are considered good for slow learner children."*

**e. Obstacles in implementing learning for slow learner children**

Obstacles often experienced by teachers during the implementation of learning process for slow learner children are, among others, the preparation of curriculum, suitable strategies, and another obstacle from other parties, namely parents who do not want their children to be included as children with special needs.

**f. Application of special curriculum for children with special needs**

Curriculum is a standard guideline in the provision of materials in inclusive schools. This means that normal and children with special needs have the same curriculum. This condition requires teachers to be creative and innovative with a suitable strategy while maintaining to deliver materials according to existing curriculum to all students. This was supported by the interview results with religious teachers who explained that, *"As a PAI teacher, throughout the preparation process, such as making a Learning Implementation Plan, I do all the works and I prepare more material or content. Usually, I discuss with the Special Guidance Teacher about the most suitable method can be applied with this kind of material and competence. The Special Guidance Teacher will suggest a method, and if it's considered appropriate, we will prepare it, but if it seems less suitable, we will further discuss it"*.

Implementing curriculum requires high level of teachers' creativity to make the students understand the existing materials. Even though the provision of materials for slow learner students have the same curriculum applied for normal peers, the teachers set the standard for students' minimum achievement.

**g. Students' ability and concentration**

The ability of slow learner children is cognitively different from normal children. This ability ultimately affects the ability to reason and concentrate. Most of the slow learner students have lower concentration power. As described by one of the teachers, *"The weaknesses posed by slow*



*learner children in this school tend to be memory weaknesses, focus, and longer time to process information. Children with special needs in this school tend to be slow in learning, such as difficulty in reading, writing, focusing, and being late to submit assignments." Another religion teacher said that to overcome the problem of such slow learner children was, "At the beginning of learning we make an approach, always persuade, and always provide encouragement and motivation when assisting/mentoring the learning."*

Another obstacle faced by teachers is the concentration and response of students with special needs. The children often did not respond at all. This makes it difficult for classroom teachers to teach. This condition was expressed by one of the religion teachers, *"In my case, one of the obstacles was, for example, I have explained it in various ways and sometimes through learning outside the classroom. However, when I asked a question, they just kept quiet. I once did an experiment in class VI, I nudged one of my students, and he or she looked so surprised. It turned out that the child was daydreaming. The nudging stimulation to the slow learner child brought back their focus on the lesson."*

One of the special guidance teachers added, *"The weaknesses of slow learner children is in memory, focus, and longer time to process information. Learning during the COVID-19 period is somewhat different from during regular times. When delivering materials that tend to be difficult, special guidance teacher will communicate with parents and students by phone/video calls to explain the material more simply and easily understood. The special guidance teacher provides examples of how to work on questions so the students can do the assignments easily. How to submit the assignments, students usually send the assignments first to the special guidance teachers to be reviewed and checked. "*

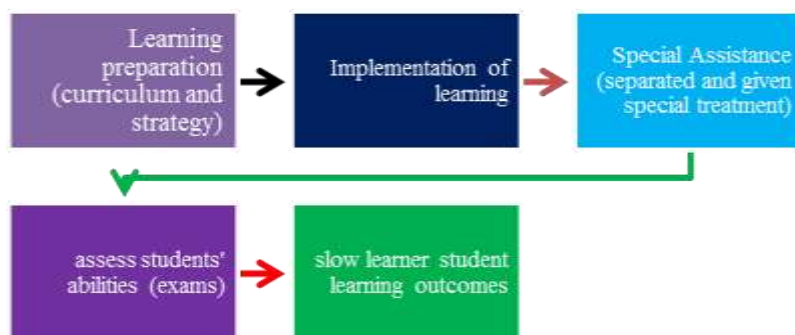
#### **h. Perceptions of Children with Special Needs**

One of the obstacles of external factors faced by teachers and schools is that there are parents who do not accept their children fall into the category of children with special needs. It also makes it a little difficult for teachers to conduct learning, especially during the pandemic period, because the role of parents is minimal in accompanying (guiding) students when studying at home. This incident was experienced by one of

the special guidance teachers during home visits, "Sometimes, the problem is not the children but the parents. They do not approve if their children are classified as Children with Special Needs, and some even got angry. We carefully and cautiously conveyed it and even we did not mention the remark of Children with Special Needs at all. We only said that if student A requires further assistance, and yes, it caused various perceptions on parents.

There is also another problem coming from classmates who are being mischievous or annoying when joking and sometimes mocking. One of the teachers said, "If special children have a good interaction with normal students both inside and outside the class, slow learner students can adjust to the association, the child sometimes looks more active by disturbing his friend, sometimes slow learner also get a little mockery like when being not fluent in reading."

Figure 1. Slow learner student learning strategies.



## 2. Discussion

The learning strategy of Islamic Religious Education subject for slow learners in inclusive schools begins with assessing [25] the children at the time of admission or enrolment. The following assessment is performed several months after the initiation of learning activities, and is conducted on students who have the characteristics of slow learners. The assessment will facilitate the implementation of learning that will be

carried out. The next step is placing Slow Learner children in parallel classes and studying together with normal children.

The strategy implemented by religious teachers together with special guidance teachers is even applied since the making of Learning Implementation Plan, where materials and learning are determined in combination with active learning that enable peers to become mentors. The teachers asked students sit next to the SL students to repeat material had been delivered or to answer some of teacher's questions during the post-test. To improve the understanding of Slow Learner children, religious teachers also used an easier and more familiar language, namely the slow learner children's mother tongue (Javanese). Through active, creative learning with modification on KKM level of 75 for normal children and 70 for SL children at the time learning evaluation, class minimum achievement criteria could be achieved.

Related to any obstacle faced by the teachers and the special tutors, they always do joint coordination to make the class learning run smoothly well. One of the emphasis is good communication with the **students**, other teachers, or even the **students**. Understandably, good communication will create a good learning process as well [26].

On the other hand, teachers and schools also give insight to the parents to keep guiding and monitoring their children. More particularly, in this pandemic condition, the cooperation between teachers, parents, and the environment is highly supportive of the learning successfulness either at school or at home [27].

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the study results, it is concluded that the aspects of learning planning, the selection of innovative strategies, teacher patience, communication, and experience are crucial in the success of learning religion for slow learner students. The determining factor for success is also influenced by the cooperation and support from parents and the surrounding environment.

Following the provisions and regulations for education offered by inclusive schools, they need to into account several significant dimensions, such as curriculum, infrastructure, and teacher competence. These three things become essential tools can be used to implement special learning in inclusive schools.

### **Recommendation**

These study results, as a form of knowledge exploration, particularly in the field of education, and more specifically about the learning for children with special needs in inclusive schools, may add and provide new information. Further researches in the future are highly expected and may increase the knowledge about the theme under study.

### **Research limitations**

This research is still far from perfect, so this study's deficiencies can be complemented by subsequent studies. Especially the study on children with special needs in the slow learner category.

### **Acknowledgment**

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**FILE HASIL REVIEW DARI REVIEWER 1 DAN 2**





## MODEL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR SLOW LEARNER CHILDREN IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

*Education is a need for everyone, including children with special needs. This study aims to capture the implementation of learning strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers to educate slow learner children at inclusive schools in Yogyakarta. This research is qualitative research using a narrative approach, with data sources consisting of eight Islamic Religious Education teachers and principals from two schools in Yogyakarta. Data obtained through in-depth interviews from eight data sources then analyzed through several stages. The stages of data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The results showed that the learning strategies applied by Islamic Religious Education teachers included peer teaching and repetition in simple language. The teacher empowered students who have comprehended the material to participate in teaching friends who fell behind (slow learner). The teacher also repeated the material in a more accessible and more straightforward language until the slow learner child could understand. Obstacles in the learning process for slow learner children were caused by two things: students' ability and concentration and the negative perception of parents about children with special needs. This study's results are expected to be a simple guide for teachers, schools, and parents.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive schools, Peer teaching, Repetition, Slow learner.*

## A. Introduction

Inclusive schools constitute the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 70 of 2009. This ministerial regulation is an appreciation of students' diversity to which educational institutions must respond positively without discrimination. Inclusive schools are traditional schools that carry out joint learning between children with special needs (ABK) and typical children in one room (Pratiwi, 2015). Carrying out the learning activity over a diverse range of students certainly requires more skills and competence, especially for dealing with slow learner children. Slow learner (SL) children have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal counterparts, so they usually need a longer learning time (Tarnoto, 2016).

Meanwhile, it has been clearly stated in the law that the purpose of education is to make students to be a faithful believers, pious, and to have good morals. Religious education thus, to achieve the goals of national education, is a primary requirement that must be obtained by every child, including children with special needs (Suyudi & Prakasa, 2020). There are many aspects need to be considered in the learning process to achieve the desired competencies. The first consideration is the competence one wants to achieve. The competencies that slow learner children must complete in each subject are usually lowered slightly below those for normal children. The teachers do this because slow learners have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal peers.

Gary R. VandenBos, in the dictionary of the American Psychological Association (APA), defines a slow learner as a child who has intelligence below the average of normal children (VandenBos, 2007). Eman Gaad added that slow learner children are those who have slow learning ability due to minor mental retardation (Gaad, 2011). Boeriswati refers to slow learner children who are usually with mild cognitive impairment, so unable to learn in general (Boeriswati, 2017). Another definition of a slow learner is a child who learns slowly in pace so that he or she is unsuccessful as he or she is lack of psychological and cognitive

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2. We advise you to concentrate on writing your introduction. Please mention some of the literature as a theory to help with your claim and issue, and then take a look at some of the earlier research to see how your study differs from that of others.

### Comment [RV2]:

- ???
- Is this an abbreviation in Indonesian? looks like you have to find another appropriate term

abilities. Slow learners are students who are slow to learn, so they take longer time compared to other counterparts with average intelligence (Amelia, 2016), except for children with intellectual disability (Hadi, 2016), so that children with these characteristics are still eligible to study along with other normal children, of course with special treatment.

John H. Peatling states, according to the IQ level, slow learner children are divided into two groups: retarded (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 67 to 89) and sub-normal (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 90 to 100) (Peatling, 1975). On the other hand, Cooter says that slow learner children's characteristics in terms of intelligence, as presented by IQ measurement tool, usually range from 70 to 85 (Cooter & Cooter, 2014). The same is said by Endry Boeriswati that slow learner children usually have an IQ range of 70-90. Chauhan also said that the IQ range of slow learner children is in the range of 80-90 (Chauhan, 2011).

Considering the condition of slow learner children with the above characteristics, inclusive learning carried out on slow learner children certainly requires a unique strategy so that learning can be successfully achieved (Ru'iyah dkk., 2021). Learning strategies are a whole series of activities teachers and students must carry out carefully (Chatib, 2014). J.R David states that learning strategies include planning, methods, or activity designed in such a way as to achieve learning objectives (Majid, 2012).

As stated in the rules for learning implementation in inclusive schools, learning activities are carried out by subject teachers along with special guidance teachers (GPK) (Zakia, 2015). Special guidance teachers are those responsible for conducting inclusive schools, thus they have such a significant role. These special tutors are responsible for designing and implementing the specialized programs.

Meanwhile, Islamic Religious Education is an integral part of the national curriculum that must be implemented for slow learner children. The implementation of Islamic Religious Education must, of course, be carried out by teachers who are competent in their fields. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education in inclusive schools are indeed obliged to

collaborate with special guidance teachers so that the implementation of learning in inclusive schools can run well. Therefore, conducting a collaborative study on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies between Islamic Religious Education teachers and special guidance teachers in inclusive schools is a new interesting thing since it is rarely done by researchers.

### 1. **Research Problems**

The problems faced by inclusive schools in providing learning to slow learner students or children are unquestionably very diverse. Starting from the learning strategy applied, the materials to be delivered, up to the special assistance, to strengthen the understanding and achievement of the desired learning targets.

### 2. **Research Question**

Based on the above conditions and problems hence this study seeks to answer research questions about what learning model that teachers do to slow learner children in the inclusive schools. Also, we will further explain about what constraints and obstacles dealt by teachers during the learning process of slow learner children in inclusive schools.

### 3. **Research Focus**

This research will focus more on discussing the experiences of PAI teachers and special guidance teachers in implementing learning in inclusive schools. It will also focus on the teacher's problems in the learning process and how to solve them.

## **B. Method**

### 1. **General Background**

This research is a qualitative research with a narrative. It aims to reveal the experiences and events faced by teachers and school principals in implementing religious learning for slow learner children in inclusive schools at the primary education level. In addition to conducting and

#### **Comment [RV3]:**

Please refer back to the author guidelines in this journal and follow every detail and template provided.

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explaining the implementation of learning activities, it will also disclose the problems and obstacles schools and teachers dealt with in implementing learning. This research was conducted for five months, starting from September 2020 to January 2021.

## 2. Respondents

The main subjects in this study were teachers and principals from two schools in the Yogyakarta region of Indonesia. The selection of subjects with the provision of religious teachers who already have at least five years of teaching experience becomes a special criterion that has been predetermined by researchers. This is intended to obtain more in-depth information and experience from the research subjects. There were eight respondents in this study, consisting of four (4) religious teachers and two (2) special guidance teachers, and two (2) principals. The respondent's identity and the school in this study were given initials to maintain the confidentiality and comfort of the respondent.

Table 1 Respondent profile

School	PAI teacher	Special guidance teacher	School Principal	Total
Primary School P	2	1	1	2
Primary School G	2	1	1	2
Total			1	8

## 3. Instruments and Procedures

Data in this study was obtained from in-depth interviews by means of interview instruments. Data collection during the pandemic period was carried out after obtaining permission from the principals and teachers, as the potential respondents. Following the policy at the time of

the pandemic, interviews were carried out in accordance with the health protocols, namely by conducting interviews at schools by maintaining the distance, wearing masks, and other procedures. Interviews were conducted for 30 to 45 minutes according to the respondent's agreement.

#### 4. Data analysis

Data reduction based on participants' experiences is an essential part of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Several stages are performed to obtain high-quality data, namely classifying crucial statements in the central theme and describing the meaning of the phenomenon's experience as a whole. The essence of the description is what is being experienced and how the individual is dealing with this experience (Cahyo Adi Kistoro dkk., 2021).

The data analysis procedure in this study started by converting the voice recordings from the interview into a transcript to quickly and easily check the various information contained. The researchers carefully read the interview transcripts several times. Along with this process, the researcher also selected important information contained in it as important statements. The important statements identified by researchers are further grouped into central themes. These important statements and central themes were then used to create a texture description, which is a description of what the participants were going through. The researchers also used those important statements and central themes to create structural description, namely a description of how participants experienced the phenomenon. The final step in this data analysis procedure was writing down the essence of all the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Essence description is a combination of textural and structural descriptions that reveal the nature of the phenomena the participant went through (Creswell, 2014).

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You need to shorten your research method to avoid the paper becoming too long. Make sure that the research design is clearly explained and that the research method is more detailed about how data is collected and analyzed. This is very important because readers should be able to replicate your study based on the level of detail provided. For example, for a qualitative study involving interviews and focus groups, the research method needs to be explained in more detail regarding the research subject so that it is clear who the subject is. In this regard, it should be noted that a more detailed explanation of the method will help readers understand how you conducted your research and replicate your study. In relation to this, in research on the learning strategies of Islamic Education in inclusive schools, a detailed explanation of the research method will enable readers to better understand how the collaboration between Islamic Education teachers and special education teachers is done in practice.

Please refer back to the author guidelines in this journal and follow every detail and template provided.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Result

#### a. Assessment for Slow Learner children

Learning in inclusive school begins with assessment from the beginning of the child's admission to school (Wati, 2014). This assessment aims to find out if the child attending the school has specificity or not. If an incoming child is known to have specificity, then the school will continue with the next assessment that is to determine the level of specificity. For example, if a child attending the school is identified to have a specificity in the field of hearing, then the school must conduct a more in-depth assessment of the level of hearing deficiency. Similarly, for children with visual impairment (blind), the school needs to carry out an assessment of the level of blindness.

Particularly for slow learner children, it is more difficult for school to detect them from the beginning since there are no specific physical signs, except for parents who brought the IQ test results. Those that have been identified to have slow learner specificities get immediate handling from the start. However, for them, there is no initial data assessment carried out during the learning process.

The assessment process was carried out on children who were indicated as slow learner children with the following characteristics: 1) having difficulty in understanding abstract concepts; 2) having limited vocabulary skills; 3) having low learning motivation; 4) requiring more extended understanding of the material, and 5) requiring repetition during material delivery [7]. Children with these characteristics were then subjected to an IQ test as the primary benchmark for determining their cognitive abilities. If the child is classified as a slow learner, the IQ test results will receive special treatment.

This assessment process was in accordance with a narrative from one of the school principals who stated that, "*Just like other children in general, parents enroll their children in school. If the prospective students already show the signs of children with special needs, then an assessment is immediately carried out. However, especially for slow learner children, those signs are often*

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To improve the study, it is necessary to explain the significant findings and their relationship with the discussion. The analysis should be detailed and clear, and the author must elaborate on research findings in the specific sub-topic. Supporting evidence, such as data collected, should be used to strengthen statements or findings. In the discussion section, the findings should be compared with the latest theories or findings from international studies. Overall, the research and discussion in this study should be improved to better contribute to the research's purpose.

*invisible because the children are physically normal. Meanwhile, students enroll in this school are based on their age, or they do not have to take a test. Therefore, the school cannot confirm from the start whether a child is classified as normal or a child with special needs (slow learner)."*

As a result, schools are often overwhelmed after several months of implementing learning activities as, in certain classes, the number of children with special needs (slow learner) exceeds the maximum number stated in the implementation regulation for inclusive schools (Fernandes, 2018). When this happens, the slow learner children in certain classes will be moved to another class so as not to violate the rules.

The initial assessment process at these two schools involved special guidance teachers so as not to misdiagnose the determination of children with special needs. As stated by the school: *"We have special guidance teachers to conduct assessments and assist children in class during the learning process. There are three special guidance teachers scheduled alternately to enter the classroom. In addition, the school provides a particular space for children with special needs. When slow learner students are no longer able to participate in a class learning at all, they are moved to that particular room to be specially assisted"*.

#### **b. Learning planning**

The learning planning for each subject in inclusive schools involves special tutors who have more competence in children with special needs (Kadir, 2015). Likewise, the lesson planning for Islamic Religious Education subjects also involves special guidance teachers. In the process of preparing the learning plan, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers focus more on the content/learning material for normal children, while the content/subject matter for children with special needs is relatively the same.

This learning plan is in tune with the description of one of the PAI teachers who stated that *"In the case of Islamic Religious Education material, the Special Guidance Teachers do not interfere and do not dare to make any modification. In contrast to the thematic material, the Special Guidance Teachers*



*is still able to make changes; for example, when determining competencies from analyzing to being familiar with. So there is a decrease of competency grade to be achieved. It is different with the subject of Islamic Religious Education; in which the Special Guidance Teachers only give advice or recommendation, so the determination of competence and material is purely come from me. "*

In the process of preparing the learning implementation plan, Special Guidance Teachers focus more on the learning method. These special tutors always take the cognitive abilities of slow learner students into their consideration, so that they can set up active learning methods and involve all children. Another learning method proposed by the Special Guidance Teacher is peer teaching, where the normal students can actively participate in being a mentor for slow learner peers.

One lesson plan was implemented by PAI teachers together with Special Guidance Teachers in inclusive classes. What distinguished the learning between normal children and slow learner children was in the implementation stage, in which slow learner children were given with more attention than their normal peers and at the time of evaluation the level of acquisition for slow learner children was slightly lowered compared to normal children (Kistoro, 2021). For example, the passing score of 75 for normal children 75, hence a score of 65 for slow learner children considered a pass.

### **c. Implementation of learning**

The implementation of inclusive class learning in these schools used a full inclusive class, where children with special needs learned together with other normal children throughout the day in regular classes using the same curriculum (Elisa & Wrastari, 2013). Therefore, as mentioned in the previous section, the Learning Implementation Plan applies to all children in the inclusive class.

Teachers who conducted learning in the inclusive class consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and Special Guidance Teachers who focused more on slow learner children. However, due to the limited number of Special Guidance Teachers, not every PAI lesson was

always accompanied by a Special Guidance Teacher. A PAI teacher said this, "At the time of the implementation, I taught in front of the class by delivering material. Meanwhile, the special tutor was at the back of the class ready to assist the children with special needs. "

In addition to carrying out the learning process along with the subject teachers, Special Guiding Teachers also give treatment for students from other classes who experience obstacles while learning. For example, when a slow learner student screams in class and does not want to be silent, the teacher blocks the child by taking him to a particular room to be handled by the Special Assistance Teacher. This was in accordance with a narrative by one of the special guidance teachers who explained that, *"When a child with special needs is acting up, a special guidance teacher will handle him or her. However, if the special guidance teacher is not in the classroom, the child with special needs keeps screaming and disturbing his or her classmates. As a consequence, we often isolate them in a particular room where a special guidance teacher can handle them"*.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning is basically the same as the learning implementation of other subjects. Religious teachers are sometimes accompanied by Special Guidance Teachers or sometimes alone in inclusive classes. At the time of observation, the teacher started the lesson by chanting prayers to begin the learning activity together; then, the teacher asked one of the students to read the pledge to keep the discipline and obey the rules, which then other students repeat.

Then the teacher presented the material with a small lecture and asked the students to open their respective books. In certain sections, the teacher asked one of the students to read on a specific page. And then, the teacher asked some questions to students to measure whether the material had been mastered or not.

PAI teachers provided equal opportunities between normal children and slow learner children. However, at the first questions, there are usually no or only few slow learner children could answer. Then the teacher repeated the material by presenting them in students' mother

tongue, by using Javanese language that allowed for slow learner children to understand better.

Interviews with the PAI teachers also confirmed it. One of them stated, "*Children with special needs often find it difficult to grasp the material directly, so teachers are required to be creative. Sometimes, explaining the material in verbal is not enough, so I show them films, or use gestures; I also make the language more accessible, like using my mother tongue or Javanese. So, I just can't keep talking in front of the class since children with special needs cannot receive the material well.*"

Another teacher said, "I often have the children in the class to do warm up before the lesson begins; I give them ice breaking to let them be refreshed so that they can regain their focus. I also often use video shows, gestures, give examples, and then continue."

The PAI teachers also several times asked normal students who sat side by side with slow learner students to answer questions so that the SL child could hear their friend's answer. The teacher also gave the opportunity to a fellow junior high school student to repeat some of the material he had delivered (repetition). A teacher shared this strategy. "*If someone still does not understand, he or she can ask questions, then I will explain again. I also often use peer learning, so a friend who sits next to him or her can answer some of the questions I give. Sometimes I also ask the student who sits next to the slow learner to repeat material I have delivered so that the Slow Learner child can accept and understand. It's probably because they have the same peer language level.*"

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, learning activities take place by using media for communication, owned by all parents. The use of Android phones is a main medium. As one of the teachers stated, "*For online learning, I use WA, Youtube, Google form. During this COVID period, I do not use a particular learning strategy, Sir, for I'm afraid that it will be too burdensome. Since other learning materials pose a lot of assignments, that will be too stressful for the students. During this period of time, I sort out the most important materials to teach. When I give them assignment, for example, I give them time to submit until 7 p.m. Some students completed the task, some others*

*did not. Still, we try to understand them. And then, I had a discussion with the special guidance teacher about any slow learner students who hadn't done their assignments. The special guidance teacher made a video call and paid home visits to provide service to students with special needs (slow learners), since only those special tutors who get permission to conduct home visits. "*

If the PAI learning process is carried out together with a special guidance teacher, that special tutor will give guidance or assist the slow learner students, those who are mostly having difficulty to concentrate. Slow learner students usually also have other abnormalities, such as hyperactivity, making them difficult to control during the class. This is the time for the function of a special guidance teachers while accompanying PAI learning in inclusive classes. It is in accordance with the guidelines of organizing inclusive schools, in which the special guidance teachers must have the following competencies: 1) general ability, namely an ability required to educate learners in general (normal children); 2) basic ability, i.e. an ability required to educate students with special needs; and 3) specific ability, namely an ability required to educate students with certain types of special needs (specialized).

The PAI and GPK teachers always pay more attention to slow learner students during and throughout the learning process. This is very important because slow learner children have a lower ability to understand lessons than normal children. Slow learner children also need more motivation compared to their normal counterparts, so PAI and GPK teachers need something more to motivate or inspire them. As addressed by one of the teachers: *"The way to assist children with special needs is to make them get interested when they start the class, make them focus on the subjects the class teacher will teach. The Special Guidance Teacher will re-explain the material that the classroom teacher had taught in an easier and understandable language for students and provide concrete examples"*.

The teacher needs to give an understanding to other normal students in advance, for they will give more attention to the SL children, hence to reduce any jealousy. The teacher has to explain that the purpose of learning in the class is so that all students can understand the material.

Therefore, if any student already understands, they should be able to teach their friends who fell behind, and must be patient if they still haven't understood. However, if the classroom learning hours are up, and the slow learner children have not yet learned the subject matter, the PAI teacher and GPK will conduct special/remedial lessons for the slow learner children.

#### **d. Learning evaluation**

Learning evaluation is a tool to determine whether a lesson's planned competence has been achieved or not (Widyawati, 2017). Evaluation is highly essential in the educational process. Evaluation is a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data obtained.

Evaluation of inclusive classes in this school was also performed together with the same questions between regular students and slow learner students. The difference is that the minimum achievement criteria (KKM) for slow learner students are lower than for normal children. For Islamic Religious Education subject, KKM for normal children was 75, while KKM for slow learner children was 70. With this decision, the achievement value of Islamic Education subject in inclusive class could be maximally achieved and all students passed the criteria.

One of the teachers said, *"I do not demand a high standard for slow learner students regarding the problem of mastering material cognitively. I'm pursuing more into real practice. For example: Have the students obediently and orderly done the five-time prayer or not? For recitation material, if students with special needs are able to read and have the correct pronunciation, it can be categorized as good. The exam questions are the same for the normal students and students with special needs. However, the grade is lowered for those with special needs. It's goodly enough if they understand one or some materials, since it is too difficult for them to understand all the materials. I also differentiate the score for normal and students with special needs, for instance, scores of 65-70 are considered good for slow learner children."*

**e. Obstacles in implementing learning for slow learner children**

Obstacles often experienced by teachers during the implementation of learning process for slow learner children are, among others, the preparation of curriculum, suitable strategies, and another obstacle from other parties, namely parents who do not want their children to be included as children with special needs.

**f. Application of special curriculum for children with special needs**

Curriculum is a standard guideline in the provision of materials in inclusive schools. This means that normal and children with special needs have the same curriculum. This condition requires teachers to be creative and innovative with a suitable strategy while maintaining to deliver materials according to existing curriculum to all students. This was supported by the interview results with religious teachers who explained that, *"As a PAI teacher, throughout the preparation process, such as making a Learning Implementation Plan, I do all the works and I prepare more material or content. Usually, I discuss with the Special Guidance Teacher about the most suitable method can be applied with this kind of material and competence. The Special Guidance Teacher will suggest a method, and if it's considered appropriate, we will prepare it, but if it seems less suitable, we will further discuss it"*.

Implementing curriculum requires high level of teachers' creativity to make the students understand the existing materials. Even though the provision of materials for slow learner students have the same curriculum applied for normal peers, the teachers set the standard for students' minimum achievement.

**g. Students' ability and concentration**

The ability of slow learner children is cognitively different from normal children. This ability ultimately affects the ability to reason and concentrate. Most of the slow learner students have lower concentration power. As described by one of the teachers, *"The weaknesses posed by slow*

learner children in this school tend to be memory weaknesses, focus, and longer time to process information. Children with special needs in this school tend to be slow in learning, such as difficulty in reading, writing, focusing, and being late to submit assignments." Another religion teacher said that to overcome the problem of such slow learner children was, "At the beginning of learning we make an approach, always persuade, and always provide encouragement and motivation when assisting/mentoring the learning."

Another obstacle faced by teachers is the concentration and response of students with special needs. The children often did not respond at all. This makes it difficult for classroom teachers to teach. This condition was expressed by one of the religion teachers, "In my case, one of the obstacles was, for example, I have explained it in various ways and sometimes through learning outside the classroom. However, when I asked a question, they just kept quiet. I once did an experiment in class VI, I nudged one of my students, and he or she looked so surprised. It turned out that the child was daydreaming. The nudging stimulation to the slow learner child brought back their focus on the lesson."

One of the special guidance teachers added, "The weaknesses of slow learner children is in memory, focus, and longer time to process information. Learning during the COVID-19 period is somewhat different from during regular times. When delivering materials that tend to be difficult, special guidance teacher will communicate with parents and students by phone/video calls to explain the material more simply and easily understood. The special guidance teacher provides examples of how to work on questions so the students can do the assignments easily. How to submit the assignments, students usually send the assignments first to the special guidance teachers to be reviewed and checked. "

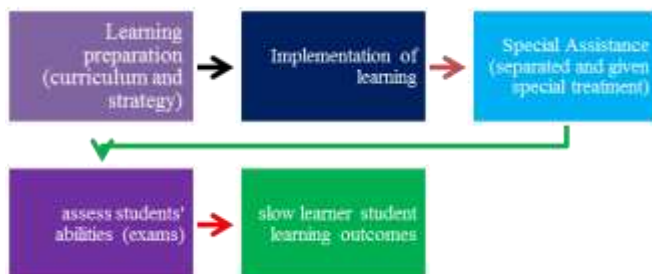
#### **h. Perceptions of Children with Special Needs**

One of the obstacles of external factors faced by teachers and schools is that there are parents who do not accept their children fall into the category of children with special needs. It also makes it a little difficult for teachers to conduct learning, especially during the pandemic period, because the role of parents is minimal in accompanying (guiding) students when studying at home. This incident was experienced by one of

the special guidance teachers during home visits, "Sometimes, the problem is not the children but the parents. They do not approve if their children are classified as Children with Special Needs, and some even get angry. We carefully and cautiously conveyed it and even we did not mention the remark of Children with Special Needs at all. We only said that if student A requires further assistance, and yes, it caused various perceptions on parents.

There is also another problem coming from classmates who are being mischievous or annoying when joking and sometimes mocking. One of the teachers said, "If special children have a good interaction with normal students both inside and outside the class, slow learner students can adjust to the association, the child sometimes looks more active by disturbing his friend, sometimes slow learner also get a little mockery like when being not fluent in reading."

Figure 1. Slow learner student learning strategies.



## 2. Discussion

The learning strategy of Islamic Religious Education subject for slow learners in inclusive schools begins with assessing [25] the children at the time of admission or enrolment. The following assessment is performed several months after the initiation of learning activities, and is conducted on students who have the characteristics of slow learners. The assessment will facilitate the implementation of learning that will be

### Comment [RV6]:

1. The discussion and/or analysis must be relevant to the study results, and needs more narration about how the data can be linked to the problem. Then, what is the argument of this paper? Please add the argument and start by saying what the author really wants to argue in this article. A conceptual framework needs to be made clear to get the appropriate discussion.

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carried out. The next step is placing Slow Learner children in parallel classes and studying together with normal children.

The strategy implemented by religious teachers together with special guidance teachers is even applied since the making of Learning Implementation Plan, where materials and learning are determined in combination with active learning that enable peers to become mentors. The teachers asked students sit next to the SL students to repeat material had been delivered or to answer some of teacher's questions during the post-test. To improve the understanding of Slow Learner children, religious teachers also used an easier and more familiar language, namely the slow learner children's mother tongue (Javanese). Through active, creative learning with modification on KKM level of 75 for normal children and 70 for SL children at the time learning evaluation, class minimum achievement criteria could be achieved.

Related to any obstacle faced by the teachers and the special tutors, they always do joint coordination to make the class learning run smoothly well. One of the emphasis is good communication with the **students**, other teachers, or even the **students**. Understandably, good communication will create a good learning process as well [26].

On the other hand, teachers and schools also give insight to the parents to keep guiding and monitoring their children. More particularly, in this pandemic condition, the cooperation between teachers, parents, and the environment is highly supportive of the learning successfulness either at school or at home [27].

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the study results, it is concluded that the aspects of learning planning, the selection of innovative strategies, teacher patience, communication, and experience are crucial in the success of learning religion for slow learner students. The determining factor for success is also influenced by the cooperation and support from parents and the surrounding environment.

### **Comment [RV8]:**

It is essential to provide a comprehensive discussion in the conclusion section. This part should synthesize the critical evaluation of research findings and explain how they contribute to knowledge. It is important to ensure that the conclusions align with the results. The conclusions must provide a clear answer to the research question.

Following the provisions and regulations for education offered by inclusive schools, they need to into account several significant dimensions, such as curriculum, infrastructure, and teacher competence. These three things become essential tools can be used to implement special learning in inclusive schools.

### **Recommendation**

These study results, as a form of knowledge exploration, particularly in the field of education, and more specifically about the learning for children with special needs in inclusive schools, may add and provide new information. Further researches in the future are highly expected and may increase the knowledge about the theme under study.

### **Research limitations**

This research is still far from perfect, so this study's deficiencies can be complemented by subsequent studies. Especially the study on children with special needs in the slow learner category.

### **Acknowledgment**

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the research team friends who worked together to collect and analyze this research data. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Ahmad Dahlan University Institute for Research and Community Service for providing support so that this research could run expectedly well.

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#### **Comment [RV9]:**

1. Need more current references that discuss a similar topic thus making the research well supported. Please add references up to date! You need additional references from international journals, and then we recommend that you quote several related articles from this journal.
2. You need to improve the structure and grammar. Extensive editing should be undertaken, since some errors in some parts of sentences in order to make sure zero errors.
3. Please adjust the overall writing of references using APA Style 7th Edition. If you are using APA style, the in-text citations must use APA style. For citations and references, it is mandatory to Use the Mendeley App;

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## MODEL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR SLOW LEARNER CHILDREN IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

Education is a need for everyone, including children with special needs. This study aims to capture the implementation of learning strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers to educate slow learner children at inclusive schools in Yogyakarta. This research is qualitative research using a narrative approach, with data sources consisting of eight Islamic Religious Education teachers and principals from two schools in Yogyakarta. Data obtained through in-depth interviews from eight data sources then analyzed through several stages. The stages of data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The results showed that the learning strategies applied by Islamic Religious Education teachers included peer teaching and repetition in simple language. The teacher empowered students who have comprehended the material to participate in teaching friends who fell behind (slow learner). The teacher also repeated the material in a more accessible and more straightforward language until the slow learner child could understand. Obstacles in the learning process for slow learner children were caused by two things: students' ability and concentration and the negative perception of parents about children with special needs. This study's results are expected to be a simple guide for teachers, schools, and parents.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive schools, Peer teaching, Repetition, Slow learner.*

**Comment [RV1]:**

The abstract must be synthesis from the content. Please pay more attention to the coverage of an abstract.

## A. Introduction

Inclusive schools constitute the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 70 of 2009. This ministerial regulation is an appreciation of students' diversity to which educational institutions must respond positively without discrimination. Inclusive schools are traditional schools that carry out joint learning between children with special needs (ABK) and typical children in one room (Pratiwi, 2015). Carrying out the learning activity over a diverse range of students certainly requires more skills and competence, especially for dealing with slow learner children. Slow learner (SL) children have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal counterparts, so they usually need a longer learning time (Tarnoto, 2016).

Meanwhile, it has been clearly stated in the law that the purpose of education is to make students to be a faithful believers, pious, and to have good morals. Religious education thus, to achieve the goals of national education, is a primary requirement that must be obtained by every child, including children with special needs (Suyudi & Prakasa, 2020). There are many aspects need to be considered in the learning process to achieve the desired competencies. The first consideration is the competence one wants to achieve. The competencies that slow learner children must complete in each subject are usually lowered slightly below those for normal children. The teachers do this because slow learners have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal peers.

Gary R. VandenBos, in the dictionary of the American Psychological Association (APA), defines a slow learner as a child who has intelligence below the average of normal children (VandenBos, 2007). Eman Gaad added that slow learner children are those who have slow learning ability due to minor mental retardation (Gaad, 2011). Boeriswati refers to slow learner children who are usually with mild cognitive impairment, so unable to learn in general (Boeriswati, 2017). Another definition of a slow learner is a child who learns slowly in pace so that he or she is unsuccessful as he or she is lack of psychological and cognitive

### Comment [RV2]:

In the introduction, emphasize the novelty of the studies conducted. The need to justify the aims and objectives should be stated in the introduction. The authors need to discuss the significance of the study. The literature review should be conducted by investigating the definition of terms, existing related work, and the available space as a gap to contribute towards problem-solving. By carefully reviewing this, it will help to look at the particular contribution to the existing literature.

abilities. Slow learners are students who are slow to learn, so they take longer time compared to other counterparts with average intelligence (Amelia, 2016), except for children with intellectual disability (Hadi, 2016), so that children with these characteristics are still eligible to study along with other normal children, of course with special treatment.

John H. Peatling states, according to the IQ level, slow learner children are divided into two groups: retarded (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 67 to 89) and sub-normal (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 90 to 100) (Peatling, 1975). On the other hand, Cooter says that slow learner children's characteristics in terms of intelligence, as presented by IQ measurement tool, usually range from 70 to 85 (Cooter & Cooter, 2014). The same is said by Endry Boeriswati that slow learner children usually have an IQ range of 70-90. Chauhan also said that the IQ range of slow learner children is in the range of 80-90 (Chauhan, 2011).

Considering the condition of slow learner children with the above characteristics, inclusive learning carried out on slow learner children certainly requires a unique strategy so that learning can be successfully achieved (Ru'iyah dkk., 2021). Learning strategies are a whole series of activities teachers and students must carry out carefully (Chatib, 2014). J.R David states that learning strategies include planning, methods, or activity designed in such a way as to achieve learning objectives (Majid, 2012).

As stated in the rules for learning implementation in inclusive schools, learning activities are carried out by subject teachers along with special guidance teachers (GPK) (Zakia, 2015). Special guidance teachers are those responsible for conducting inclusive schools, thus they have such a significant role. These special tutors are responsible for designing and implementing the specialized programs.

Meanwhile, Islamic Religious Education is an integral part of the national curriculum that must be implemented for slow learner children. The implementation of Islamic Religious Education must, of course, be carried out by teachers who are competent in their fields. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education in inclusive schools are indeed obliged to

collaborate with special guidance teachers so that the implementation of learning in inclusive schools can run well. Therefore, conducting a collaborative study on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies between Islamic Religious Education teachers and special guidance teachers in inclusive schools is a new interesting thing since it is rarely done by researchers.

### 1. **Research Problems**

The problems faced by inclusive schools in providing learning to slow learner students or children are unquestionably very diverse. Starting from the learning strategy applied, the materials to be delivered, up to the special assistance, to strengthen the understanding and achievement of the desired learning targets.

### 2. **Research Question**

Based on the above conditions and problems hence this study seeks to answer research questions about what learning model that teachers do to slow learner children in the inclusive schools. Also, we will further explain about what constraints and obstacles dealt by teachers during the learning process of slow learner children in inclusive schools.

### 3. **Research Focus**

This research will focus more on discussing the experiences of PAI teachers and special guidance teachers in implementing learning in inclusive schools. It will also focus on the teacher's problems in the learning process and how to solve them.

## B. **Method**

### 1. **General Background**

This research is a qualitative research with a narrative. It aims to reveal the experiences and events faced by teachers and school principals in implementing religious learning for slow learner children in inclusive schools at the primary education level. In addition to conducting and

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The research design should be clearly explained. In addition, we noticed that your methods are lacking detail on how exactly the study was performed. How data is collected, and how it is analyzed. you should explain this in detail and briefly. Please remember that the reader should be able to reproduce your study based on the level of detail you provide. For instance, for qualitative studies involving interviews and focus groups. The method may need to be explained in more detail related to the research subject so that it becomes clear who is the subject.



explaining the implementation of learning activities, it will also disclose the problems and obstacles schools and teachers dealt with in implementing learning. This research was conducted for five months, starting from September 2020 to January 2021.

## 2. Respondents

The main subjects in this study were teachers and principals from two schools in the Yogyakarta region of Indonesia. The selection of subjects with the provision of religious teachers who already have at least five years of teaching experience becomes a special criterion that has been predetermined by researchers. This is intended to obtain more in-depth information and experience from the research subjects. There were eight respondents in this study, consisting of four (4) religious teachers and two (2) special guidance teachers, and two (2) principals. The respondent's identity and the school in this study were given initials to maintain the confidentiality and comfort of the respondent.

Table 1 Respondent profile

School	PAI teacher	Special guidance teacher	School Principal	Total
Primary School P	2	1		2
			1	1
Primary School G	2	1		2
			1	1
Total			1	8

## 3. Instruments and Procedures

Data in this study was obtained from in-depth interviews by means of interview instruments. Data collection during the pandemic period was carried out after obtaining permission from the principals and teachers, as the potential respondents. Following the policy at the time of

the pandemic, interviews were carried out in accordance with the health protocols, namely by conducting interviews at schools by maintaining the distance, wearing masks, and other procedures. Interviews were conducted for 30 to 45 minutes according to the respondent's agreement.

#### **4. Data analysis**

Data reduction based on participants' experiences is an essential part of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Several stages are performed to obtain high-quality data, namely classifying crucial statements in the central theme and describing the meaning of the phenomenon's experience as a whole. The essence of the description is what is being experienced and how the individual is dealing with this experience (Cahyo Adi Kistoro dkk., 2021).

The data analysis procedure in this study started by converting the voice recordings from the interview into a transcript to quickly and easily check the various information contained. The researchers carefully read the interview transcripts several times. Along with this process, the researcher also selected important information contained in it as important statements. The important statements identified by researchers are further grouped into central themes. These important statements and central themes were then used to create a texture description, which is a description of what the participants were going through. The researchers also used those important statements and central themes to create structural description, namely a description of how participants experienced the phenomenon. The final step in this data analysis procedure was writing down the essence of all the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Essence description is a combination of textural and structural descriptions that reveal the nature of the phenomena the participant went through (Creswell, 2014).

## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **1. Result**

#### **a. Assessment for Slow Learner children**

Learning in inclusive school begins with assessment from the beginning of the child's admission to school (Wati, 2014). This assessment aims to find out if the child attending the school has specificity or not. If an incoming child is known to have specificity, then the school will continue with the next assessment that is to determine the level of specificity. For example, if a child attending the school is identified to have a specificity in the field of hearing, then the school must conduct a more in-depth assessment of the level of hearing deficiency. Similarly, for children with visual impairment (blind), the school needs to carry out an assessment of the level of blindness.

Particularly for slow learner children, it is more difficult for school to detect them from the beginning since there are no specific physical signs, except for parents who brought the IQ test results. Those that have been identified to have slow learner specificities get immediate handling from the start. However, for them, there is no initial data assessment carried out during the learning process.

The assessment process was carried out on children who were indicated as slow learner children with the following characteristics: 1) having difficulty in understanding abstract concepts; 2) having limited vocabulary skills; 3) having low learning motivation; 4) requiring more extended understanding of the material, and 5) requiring repetition during material delivery [7]. Children with these characteristics were then subjected to an IQ test as the primary benchmark for determining their cognitive abilities. If the child is classified as a slow learner, the IQ test results will receive special treatment.

This assessment process was in accordance with a narrative from one of the school principals who stated that, "*Just like other children in general, parents enroll their children in school. If the prospective students already show the signs of children with special needs, then an assessment is immediately carried out. However, especially for slow learner children, those signs are often*

*invisible because the children are physically normal. Meanwhile, students enroll in this school are based on their age, or they do not have to take a test. Therefore, the school cannot confirm from the start whether a child is classified as normal or a child with special needs (slow learner)."*

As a result, schools are often overwhelmed after several months of implementing learning activities as, in certain classes, the number of children with special needs (slow learner) exceeds the maximum number stated in the implementation regulation for inclusive schools (Fernandes, 2018). When this happens, the slow learner children in certain classes will be moved to another class so as not to violate the rules.

The initial assessment process at these two schools involved special guidance teachers so as not to misdiagnose the determination of children with special needs. As stated by the school: *"We have special guidance teachers to conduct assessments and assist children in class during the learning process. There are three special guidance teachers scheduled alternately to enter the classroom. In addition, the school provides a particular space for children with special needs. When slow learner students are no longer able to participate in a class learning at all, they are moved to that particular room to be specially assisted"*.

#### **b. Learning planning**

The learning planning for each subject in inclusive schools involves special tutors who have more competence in children with special needs (Kadir, 2015). Likewise, the lesson planning for Islamic Religious Education subjects also involves special guidance teachers. In the process of preparing the learning plan, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers focus more on the content/learning material for normal children, while the content/subject matter for children with special needs is relatively the same.

This learning plan is in tune with the description of one of the PAI teachers who stated that *"In the case of Islamic Religious Education material, the Special Guidance Teachers do not interfere and do not dare to make any modification. In contrast to the thematic material, the Special Guidance Teachers*

*is still able to make changes; for example, when determining competencies from analyzing to being familiar with. So there is a decrease of competency grade to be achieved. It is different with the subject of Islamic Religious Education; in which the Special Guidance Teachers only give advice or recommendation, so the determination of competence and material is purely come from me. "*

In the process of preparing the learning implementation plan, Special Guidance Teachers focus more on the learning method. These special tutors always take the cognitive abilities of slow learner students into their consideration, so that they can set up active learning methods and involve all children. Another learning method proposed by the Special Guidance Teacher is peer teaching, where the normal students can actively participate in being a mentor for slow learner peers.

One lesson plan was implemented by PAI teachers together with Special Guidance Teachers in inclusive classes. What distinguished the learning between normal children and slow learner children was in the implementation stage, in which slow learner children were given with more attention than their normal peers and at the time of evaluation the level of acquisition for slow learner children was slightly lowered compared to normal children (Kistoro, 2021). For example, the passing score of 75 for normal children 75, hence a score of 65 for slow learner children considered a pass.

### **c. Implementation of learning**

The implementation of inclusive class learning in these schools used a full inclusive class, where children with special needs learned together with other normal children throughout the day in regular classes using the same curriculum (Elisa & Wrastari, 2013). Therefore, as mentioned in the previous section, the Learning Implementation Plan applies to all children in the inclusive class.

Teachers who conducted learning in the inclusive class consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and Special Guidance Teachers who focused more on slow learner children. However, due to the limited number of Special Guidance Teachers, not every PAI lesson was

always accompanied by a Special Guidance Teacher. A PAI teacher said this, "At the time of the implementation, I taught in front of the class by delivering material. Meanwhile, the special tutor was at the back of the class ready to assist the children with special needs. "

In addition to carrying out the learning process along with the subject teachers, Special Guiding Teachers also give treatment for students from other classes who experience obstacles while learning. For example, when a slow learner student screams in class and does not want to be silent, the teacher blocks the child by taking him to a particular room to be handled by the Special Assistance Teacher. This was in accordance with a narrative by one of the special guidance teachers who explained that, *"When a child with special needs is acting up, a special guidance teacher will handle him or her. However, if the special guidance teacher is not in the classroom, the child with special needs keeps screaming and disturbing his or her classmates. As a consequence, we often isolate them in a particular room where a special guidance teacher can handle them"*.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning is basically the same as the learning implementation of other subjects. Religious teachers are sometimes accompanied by Special Guidance Teachers or sometimes alone in inclusive classes. At the time of observation, the teacher started the lesson by chanting prayers to begin the learning activity together; then, the teacher asked one of the students to read the pledge to keep the discipline and obey the rules, which then other students repeat.

Then the teacher presented the material with a small lecture and asked the students to open their respective books. In certain sections, the teacher asked one of the students to read on a specific page. And then, the teacher asked some questions to students to measure whether the material had been mastered or not.

PAI teachers provided equal opportunities between normal children and slow learner children. However, at the first questions, there are usually no or only few slow learner children could answer. Then the teacher repeated the material by presenting them in students' mother

tongue, by using Javanese language that allowed for slow learner children to understand better.

Interviews with the PAI teachers also confirmed it. One of them stated, *"Children with special needs often find it difficult to grasp the material directly, so teachers are required to be creative. Sometimes, explaining the material in verbal is not enough, so I show them films, or use gestures; I also make the language more accessible, like using my mother tongue or Javanese. So, I just can't keep talking in front of the class since children with special needs cannot receive the material well."*

Another teacher said, *"I often have the children in the class to do warm up before the lesson begins; I give them ice breaking to let them be refreshed so that they can regain their focus. I also often use video shows, gestures, give examples, and then continue."*

The PAI teachers also several times asked normal students who sat side by side with slow learner students to answer questions so that the SL child could hear their friend's answer. The teacher also gave the opportunity to a fellow junior high school student to repeat some of the material he had delivered (repetition). A teacher shared this strategy. *"If someone still does not understand, he or she can ask questions, then I will explain again. I also often use peer learning, so a friend who sits next to him or her can answer some of the questions I give. Sometimes I also ask the student who sits next to the slow learner to repeat material I have delivered so that the Slow Learner child can accept and understand. It's probably because they have the same peer language level."*

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, learning activities take place by using media for communication, owned by all parents. The use of Android phones is a main medium. As one of the teachers stated, *"For online learning, I use WA, Youtube, Google form. During this COVID period, I do not use a particular learning strategy, Sir, for I'm afraid that it will be too burdensome. Since other learning materials pose a lot of assignments, that will be too stressful for the students. During this period of time, I sort out the most important materials to teach. When I give them assignment, for example, I give them time to submit until 7 p.m. Some students completed the task, some others*

*did not. Still, we try to understand them. And then, I had a discussion with the special guidance teacher about any slow learner students who hadn't done their assignments. The special guidance teacher made a video call and paid home visits to provide service to students with special needs (slow learners), since only those special tutors who get permission to conduct home visits. "*

If the PAI learning process is carried out together with a special guidance teacher, that special tutor will give guidance or assist the slow learner students, those who are mostly having difficulty to concentrate. Slow learner students usually also have other abnormalities, such as hyperactivity, making them difficult to control during the class. This is the time for the function of a special guidance teachers while accompanying PAI learning in inclusive classes. It is in accordance with the guidelines of organizing inclusive schools, in which the special guidance teachers must have the following competencies: 1) general ability, namely an ability required to educate learners in general (normal children); 2) basic ability, i.e. an ability required to educate students with special needs; and 3) specific ability, namely an ability required to educate students with certain types of special needs (specialized).

The PAI and GPK teachers always pay more attention to slow learner students during and throughout the learning process. This is very important because slow learner children have a lower ability to understand lessons than normal children. Slow learner children also need more motivation compared to their normal counterparts, so PAI and GPK teachers need something more to motivate or inspire them. As addressed by one of the teachers: *"The way to assist children with special needs is to make them get interested when they start the class, make them focus on the subjects the class teacher will teach. The Special Guidance Teacher will re-explain the material that the classroom teacher had taught in an easier and understandable language for students and provide concrete examples"*.

The teacher needs to give an understanding to other normal students in advance, for they will give more attention to the SL children, hence to reduce any jealousy. The teacher has to explain that the purpose of learning in the class is so that all students can understand the material.



Therefore, if any student already understands, they should be able to teach their friends who fell behind, and must be patient if they still haven't understood. However, if the classroom learning hours are up, and the slow learner children have not yet learned the subject matter, the PAI teacher and GPK will conduct special/remedial lessons for the slow learner children.

#### **d. Learning evaluation**

Learning evaluation is a tool to determine whether a lesson's planned competence has been achieved or not (Widyawati, 2017). Evaluation is highly essential in the educational process. Evaluation is a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data obtained.

Evaluation of inclusive classes in this school was also performed together with the same questions between regular students and slow learner students. The difference is that the minimum achievement criteria (KKM) for slow learner students are lower than for normal children. For Islamic Religious Education subject, KKM for normal children was 75, while KKM for slow learner children was 70. With this decision, the achievement value of Islamic Education subject in inclusive class could be maximally achieved and all students passed the criteria.

One of the teachers said, *"I do not demand a high standard for slow learner students regarding the problem of mastering material cognitively. I'm pursuing more into real practice. For example: Have the students obediently and orderly done the five-time prayer or not? For recitation material, if students with special needs are able to read and have the correct pronunciation, it can be categorized as good. The exam questions are the same for the normal students and students with special needs. However, the grade is lowered for those with special needs. It's goodly enough if they understand one or some materials, since it is too difficult for them to understand all the materials. I also differentiate the score for normal and students with special needs, for instance, scores of 65-70 are considered good for slow learner children."*

**e. Obstacles in implementing learning for slow learner children**

Obstacles often experienced by teachers during the implementation of learning process for slow learner children are, among others, the preparation of curriculum, suitable strategies, and another obstacle from other parties, namely parents who do not want their children to be included as children with special needs.

**f. Application of special curriculum for children with special needs**

Curriculum is a standard guideline in the provision of materials in inclusive schools. This means that normal and children with special needs have the same curriculum. This condition requires teachers to be creative and innovative with a suitable strategy while maintaining to deliver materials according to existing curriculum to all students. This was supported by the interview results with religious teachers who explained that, *"As a PAI teacher, throughout the preparation process, such as making a Learning Implementation Plan, I do all the works and I prepare more material or content. Usually, I discuss with the Special Guidance Teacher about the most suitable method can be applied with this kind of material and competence. The Special Guidance Teacher will suggest a method, and if it's considered appropriate, we will prepare it, but if it seems less suitable, we will further discuss it"*.

Implementing curriculum requires high level of teachers' creativity to make the students understand the existing materials. Even though the provision of materials for slow learner students have the same curriculum applied for normal peers, the teachers set the standard for students' minimum achievement.

**g. Students' ability and concentration**

The ability of slow learner children is cognitively different from normal children. This ability ultimately affects the ability to reason and concentrate. Most of the slow learner students have lower concentration power. As described by one of the teachers, *"The weaknesses posed by slow*

learner children in this school tend to be memory weaknesses, focus, and longer time to process information. Children with special needs in this school tend to be slow in learning, such as difficulty in reading, writing, focusing, and being late to submit assignments." Another religion teacher said that to overcome the problem of such slow learner children was, "At the beginning of learning we make an approach, always persuade, and always provide encouragement and motivation when assisting/mentoring the learning."

Another obstacle faced by teachers is the concentration and response of students with special needs. The children often did not respond at all. This makes it difficult for classroom teachers to teach. This condition was expressed by one of the religion teachers, "In my case, one of the obstacles was, for example, I have explained it in various ways and sometimes through learning outside the classroom. However, when I asked a question, they just kept quiet. I once did an experiment in class VI, I nudged one of my students, and he or she looked so surprised. It turned out that the child was daydreaming. The nudging stimulation to the slow learner child brought back their focus on the lesson."

One of the special guidance teachers added, "The weaknesses of slow learner children is in memory, focus, and longer time to process information. Learning during the COVID-19 period is somewhat different from during regular times. When delivering materials that tend to be difficult, special guidance teacher will communicate with parents and students by phone/video calls to explain the material more simply and easily understood. The special guidance teacher provides examples of how to work on questions so the students can do the assignments easily. How to submit the assignments, students usually send the assignments first to the special guidance teachers to be reviewed and checked. "

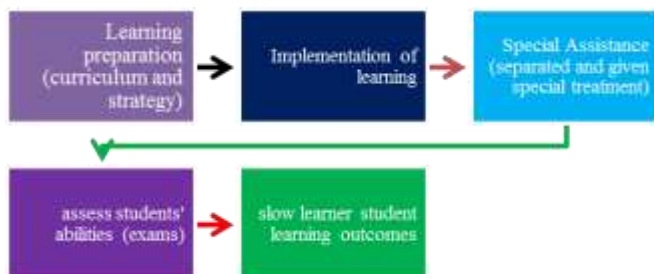
#### **h. Perceptions of Children with Special Needs**

One of the obstacles of external factors faced by teachers and schools is that there are parents who do not accept their children fall into the category of children with special needs. It also makes it a little difficult for teachers to conduct learning, especially during the pandemic period, because the role of parents is minimal in accompanying (guiding) students when studying at home. This incident was experienced by one of

the special guidance teachers during home visits, "Sometimes, the problem is not the children but the parents. They do not approve if their children are classified as Children with Special Needs, and some even got angry. We carefully and cautiously conveyed it and even we did not mention the remark of Children with Special Needs at all. We only said that if student A requires further assistance, and yes, it caused various perceptions on parents.

There is also another problem coming from classmates who are being mischievous or annoying when joking and sometimes mocking. One of the teachers said, "If special children have a good interaction with normal students both inside and outside the class, slow learner students can adjust to the association, the child sometimes looks more active by disturbing his friend, sometimes slow learner also get a little mockery like when being not fluent in reading."

Figure 1. Slow learner student learning strategies.



## 2. Discussion

The learning strategy of Islamic Religious Education subject for slow learners in inclusive schools begins with assessing [25] the children at the time of admission or enrolment. The following assessment is performed several months after the initiation of learning activities, and is conducted on students who have the characteristics of slow learners. The assessment will facilitate the implementation of learning that will be

carried out. The next step is placing Slow Learner children in parallel classes and studying together with normal children.

The strategy implemented by religious teachers together with special guidance teachers is even applied since the making of Learning Implementation Plan, where materials and learning are determined in combination with active learning that enable peers to become mentors. The teachers asked students sit next to the SL students to repeat material had been delivered or to answer some of teacher's questions during the post-test. To improve the understanding of Slow Learner children, religious teachers also used an easier and more familiar language, namely the slow learner children's mother tongue (Javanese). Through active, creative learning with modification on KKM level of 75 for normal children and 70 for SL children at the time learning evaluation, class minimum achievement criteria could be achieved.

Related to any obstacle faced by the teachers and the special tutors, they always do joint coordination to make the class learning run smoothly well. One of the emphasis is good communication with the **students**, other teachers, or even the **students**. Understandably, good communication will create a good learning process as well [26].

On the other hand, teachers and schools also give insight to the parents to keep guiding and monitoring their children. More particularly, in this pandemic condition, the cooperation between teachers, parents, and the environment is highly supportive of the learning successfulness either at school or at home [27].

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the study results, it is concluded that the aspects of learning planning, the selection of innovative strategies, teacher patience, communication, and experience are crucial in the success of learning religion for slow learner students. The determining factor for success is also influenced by the cooperation and support from parents and the surrounding environment.

Following the provisions and regulations for education offered by inclusive schools, they need to into account several significant dimensions, such as curriculum, infrastructure, and teacher competence. These three things become essential tools can be used to implement special learning in inclusive schools.

### **Recommendation**

These study results, as a form of knowledge exploration, particularly in the field of education, and more specifically about the learning for children with special needs in inclusive schools, may add and provide new information. Further researches in the future are highly expected and may increase the knowledge about the theme under study.

### **Research limitations**

This research is still far from perfect, so this study's deficiencies can be complemented by subsequent studies. Especially the study on children with special needs in the slow learner category.

### **Acknowledgment**

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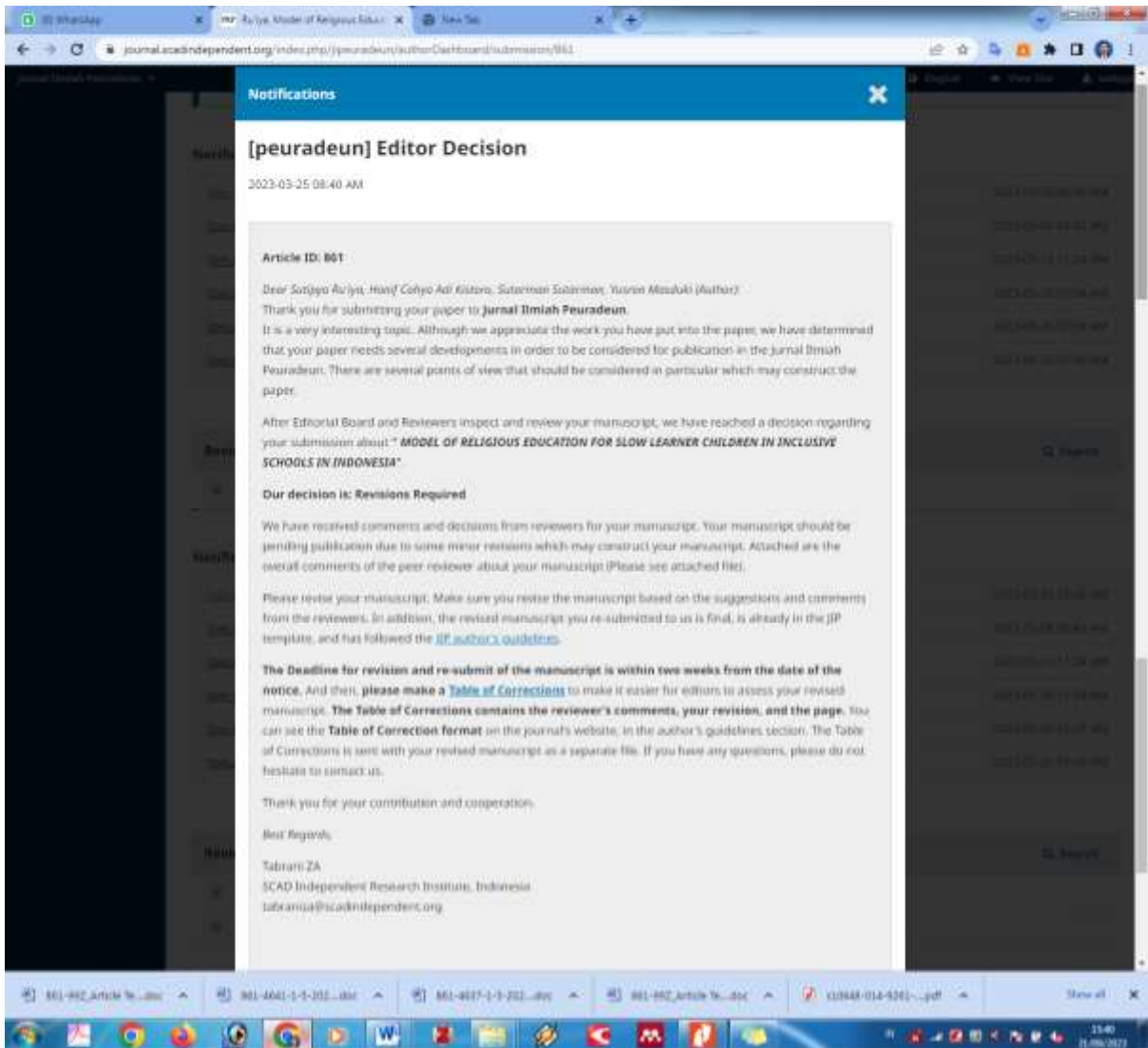
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**FILE REVISI**



## MODEL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR SLOW LEARNER CHILDREN IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

School is a formal institution which is the right place for students to develop their potential. The goal of national education is to provide space and educational materials for every student, including slow learner students. Religious education material is one of the materials that must be provided. The purpose of this research is to describe the learning strategies used by religious teachers to slow learner students. This qualitative research uses a narrative approach. There were eight participants consisting of Islamic religion teachers, special guidance teachers and two school principals. Data collection through in-depth interviews and analyzed with the stages of data reduction, presentation and interpretation. This research found peer teaching and repetition models to be the main models of learning. This is consistent with the character of slow learner students whose cognitive abilities are below average. Slow learner students tend to accept material slowly and repeatedly. They are also more comfortable when being taught by peers because psychologically they feel the same age. Meanwhile, the biggest obstacle for slow learner students in learning is limited cognitive ability, unstable concentration power and negative image of parents towards children's abilities. The findings of this study are interesting to be used as a reference for teachers and parents in educating slow learner children.

**Keywords:** Education; Politics; Economics; Finance; Cultural Studies.

## A. Introduction

Inclusive schools constitute the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 70 of 2009. This ministerial regulation is an appreciation of students' diversity to which educational institutions must respond positively without discrimination. Inclusive schools are traditional schools that carry out joint learning between children **with special needs** and typical children in one room (Candra Pratiwi, 2015). Carrying out the learning activity over a diverse range of students certainly requires more skills and competence, especially for dealing with slow learner children. Slow learner (SL) children have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal counterparts, so they usually need a longer learning time (Tarnoto, 2016).

Meanwhile, it has been clearly stated in the law that the purpose of education is to make students to be a faithful believers, pious, and to have good morals. Religious education thus, to achieve the goals of national education, is a primary requirement that must be obtained by every child, including children with special needs (Suyudi & Prakasa, n.d.). There are many aspects need to be considered in the learning process to achieve the desired competencies. The first consideration is the competence one wants to achieve. The competencies that slow learner children must complete in each subject are usually lowered slightly below those for normal children. The teachers do this because slow learners have lower cognitive abilities compared to their normal peers.

Gary R. VandenBos, in the dictionary of the American Psychological Association (APA), defines a slow learner as a child who has intelligence below the average of normal children (VandenBos, 2007). Eman Gaad added that slow learner children are those who have slow learning ability due to minor mental retardation (Gaad, 2011). Boeriswati refers to slow learner children who are usually with mild cognitive impairment, so unable to learn in general (Rasmitadila et al., 2017). Another definition of a slow learner is a child who learns slowly in pace so that he or she is unsuccessful as he or she is lack of psychological and

cognitive abilities. Slow learners are students who are slow to learn, so they take longer time compared to other counterparts with average intelligence (Amelia, 2016). Except for children with intellectual disability (Hadi, 2016), so that children with these characteristics are still eligible to study along with other normal children, of course with special treatment.

John H. Peatling states, according to the IQ level, slow learner children are divided into two groups: retarded (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 67 to 89) and sub-normal (namely, those with intelligence test scores from 90 to 100) (Peatling, 2011). On the other hand, Cooter says that slow learner children's characteristics in terms of intelligence, as presented by IQ measurement tool, usually range from 70 to 85 (Cooter & Cooter, 2014). The same is said by Endry Boeriswati that slow learner children usually have an IQ range of 70-90. Chauhan also said that the IQ range of slow learner children is in the range of 80-90 (Sangeeta Chauhan, 2011).

Considering the condition of slow learner children with the above characteristics, inclusive learning carried out on slow learner children certainly requires a unique strategy so that learning can be successfully achieved (Ru'iyah et al., 2021). Learning strategies are a whole series of activities teachers and students must carry out carefully (Chatib, 2014). J.R David states that learning strategies include planning, methods, or activity designed in such a way as to achieve learning objectives (Majid, 2012).

As stated in the rules for learning implementation in inclusive schools, learning activities are carried out by subject teachers along with special guidance teachers (GPK) (Zakia, 2015). Special guidance teachers are those responsible for conducting inclusive schools, thus they have such a significant role. These special tutors are responsible for designing and implementing the specialized programs.

Meanwhile, Islamic Religious Education is an integral part of the national curriculum that must be implemented for slow learner children. The implementation of Islamic Religious Education must, of course, be carried out by teachers who are competent in their fields. Teachers of

Islamic Religious Education in inclusive schools are indeed obliged to collaborate with special guidance teachers so that the implementation of learning in inclusive schools can run well. Therefore, conducting a collaborative study on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies between Islamic Religious Education teachers and special guidance teachers in inclusive schools is a new interesting thing since it is rarely done by researchers.

Some research on learning models for children with special needs has been carried out by previous researchers. Some have researched the abilities of slow learner children and also autistic children. Research conducted by Adhi & Seniwati found that the form and meaning of revitalization for children with special needs in inclusive schools, especially at SD Saraswati Tabanan and Bali. The results of the research show that a form of revitalization is an increase in resources, such as workshops for teachers and students' parents; providing apprenticeships for school staff, particularly school librarian managers; increase the involvement of children with special needs with other peers in self-development; complementing facilities such as special guidance rooms and library facilities (Adhi & Seniwati, 2018).

Research conducted by Azhari on children with dyscalculia found that there is a mathematics learning model to help children with special needs with dyscalculia in elementary schools to help with their learning difficulties (Azhari et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, Kistoro's research findings explain how to improve the learning of slow learners in learning to read the Qur'an (Kistoro, 2021). Kistoro's other findings regarding autistic children highlight the importance of character education for autistic children with three learning models namely explanatory, practice, and intensive mentoring (Kistoro et al., 2021).

Some of the research above shows that there are differences with the research conducted in that the emphasis on research lies in the model of religious education for children with autism. While other research

examines the themes of character education, mathematics education and learning the Qur'an.

The problems faced by inclusive schools in providing learning to slow learner students or children are unquestionably very diverse. Starting from the learning strategy applied, the materials to be delivered, up to the special assistance, to strengthen the understanding and achievement of the desired learning targets.

Based on the above conditions and problems hence this study seeks to answer research questions about what learning model that teachers do to slow learner children in the inclusive schools. Also, we will further explain about what constraints and obstacles dealt by teachers during the learning process of slow learner children in inclusive schools.

This research will focus more on discussing the experiences of PAI teachers and special guidance teachers in implementing learning in inclusive schools. It will also focus on the teacher's problems in the learning process and how to solve them.

## **B. Method**

This research is a qualitative research with a narrative (Taylor et al., 2016). It aims to reveal the experiences and events faced by teachers and school principals in implementing religious learning for slow learner children in inclusive schools at the primary education level. In addition to conducting and explaining the implementation of learning activities, it will also disclose the problems and obstacles schools and teachers dealt with in implementing learning. This research was conducted for five months, starting from September 2020 to January 2021.

The research design was designed with pre-research stages in the form of choosing themes based on field problems, initial observations at research locations, making research timelines, making research instruments, collecting data, analyzing and reporting research results.

The main object of this research is autistic children who are in inclusive schools with regard to the processes and learning models at school. The main subjects in this study were teachers and principals from two schools in the Yogyakarta region of Indonesia. The selection of subjects with the provision of religious teachers who already have at least five years of teaching experience becomes a special criterion that has been predetermined by researchers. This is intended to obtain more in-depth information and experience from the research subjects. There were eight respondents in this study, consisting of four (4) religious teachers and two (2) special guidance teachers, and two (2) principals. The respondent's identity and the school in this study were given initials to maintain the confidentiality and comfort of the respondent.

Table 1 Respondent profile

School	PAI teacher	Special guidance teacher	School Principal	Total
Primary School P	2			2
		1		1
			1	1
Primary School G	2			2
		1		1
			1	1
Total				8

Data in this study was obtained from in-depth interviews by means of interview instruments. Data collection during the pandemic period was carried out after obtaining permission from the principals and teachers, as the potential respondents. Following the policy at the time of the pandemic, interviews were carried out in accordance with the health protocols, namely by conducting interviews at schools by maintaining the distance, wearing masks, and other procedures. Interviews were conducted for 30 to 45 minutes according to the respondent's agreement.



Data reduction based on participants' experiences is an essential part of data analysis (Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M, Saldana, 2014). Several stages are performed to obtain high-quality data, namely classifying crucial statements in the central theme and describing the meaning of the phenomenon's experience as a whole. The essence of the description is what is being experienced and how the individual is dealing with this experience (Moustakas, 1994).

The data analysis procedure in this study started by converting the voice recordings from the interview into a transcript to quickly and easily check the various information contained. The researchers carefully read the interview transcripts several times. Along with this process, the researcher also selected important information contained in it as important statements. The important statements identified by researchers are further grouped into central themes. These important statements and central themes were then used to create a texture description, which is a description of what the participants were going through. The researchers also used those important statements and central themes to create structural description, namely a description of how participants experienced the phenomenon. The final step in this data analysis procedure was writing down the essence of all the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Essence description is a combination of textural and structural descriptions that reveal the nature of the phenomena the participant went through (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### C. Result Finding

Based on the research findings, it illustrates that the religious learning model for slow learners in inclusive schools can be classified in the pre-learning process, lesson planning, learning implementation and evaluation. The findings are briefly described in table 2.

Table 1. Themes of research findings

No	Pre learning	Learning planning	Implementati on of learning	Kendala	Dukungan
1.	The initial assessment	preparation of material	Opening class with prayer	Determinatio n of different	There is an accompanyi

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	determines the special abilities of students (hearing, blindness, IQ test)	according to student abilities		minimum completeness criteria (KKM).	ng teacher
2.	Assessment indicators (difficulty understanding abstract concepts, vocabulary skills, learning motivation, material understanding)	Use of special methods	Delivering material with lectures	The curriculum is still the same	Good student interaction
3.		Determination of graduation indicators	Giving questions	The ability and concentration of slow learner students	Smooth communication
4.			Special assistance for slow learner children	Memory and time understanding of student material	
5				Negative perceptions of slow learner students	

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Learning in inclusive school begins with assessment from the beginning of the child's admission to school(Wati, 2014). This assessment aims to find out if the child attending the school has specificity or not. If an incoming child is known to have specificity, then the school will continue with the next assessment that is to determine the level of specificity. For example, if a child attending the school is identified to have a specificity in the field of hearing, then the school must conduct a

more in-depth assessment of the level of hearing deficiency. Similarly, for children with visual impairment (blind), the school needs to carry out an assessment of the level of blindness.

Particularly for slow learner children, it is more difficult for school to detect them from the beginning since there are no specific physical signs, except for parents who brought the IQ test results. Those that have been identified to have slow learner specificities get immediate handling from the start. However, for them, there is no initial data assessment carried out during the learning process.

The assessment process was carried out on children who were indicated as slow learner children with the following characteristics: 1) having difficulty in understanding abstract concepts; 2) having limited vocabulary skills; 3) having low learning motivation; 4) requiring more extended understanding of the material, and 5) requiring repetition during material delivery. Children with these characteristics were then subjected to an IQ test as the primary benchmark for determining their cognitive abilities. If the child is classified as a slow learner, the IQ test results will receive special treatment.

This assessment process was in accordance with a narrative from one of the school principals who stated that, "Just like other children in general, parents enroll their children in school. If the prospective students already show the signs of children with special needs, then an assessment is immediately carried out. However, especially for slow learner children, those signs are often invisible because the children are physically normal. Meanwhile, students enroll in this school are based on their age, or they do not have to take a test. Therefore, the school cannot confirm from the start whether a child is classified as normal or a child with special needs (slow learner)."

As a result, schools are often overwhelmed after several months of implementing learning activities as, in certain classes, the number of children with special needs (slow learner) exceeds the maximum number stated in the implementation regulation for inclusive schools(Fernandes,

2018). When this happens, the slow learner children in certain classes will be moved to another class so as not to violate the rules.

The initial assessment process at these two schools involved special guidance teachers so as not to misdiagnose the determination of children with special needs. As stated by the school: "We have special guidance teachers to conduct assessments and assist children in class during the learning process. There are three special guidance teachers scheduled alternately to enter the classroom. In addition, the school provides a particular space for children with special needs. When slow learner students are no longer able to participate in a class learning at all, they are moved to that particular room to be specially assisted".

The learning planning for each subject in inclusive schools involves special tutors who have more competence in children with special needs (Kadir, 2015). Likewise, the lesson planning for Islamic Religious Education subjects also involves special guidance teachers. In the process of preparing the learning plan, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers focus more on the content/learning material for normal children, while the content/subject matter for children with special needs is relatively the same.

This learning plan is in tune with the description of one of the PAI teachers who stated that "In the case of Islamic Religious Education material, the Special Guidance Teachers do not interfere and do not dare to make any modification. In contrast to the thematic material, the Special Guidance Teachers is still able to make changes; for example, when determining competencies from analyzing to being familiar with. So there is a decrease of competency grade to be achieved. It is different with the subject of Islamic Religious Education; in which the Special Guidance Teachers only give advice or recommendation, so the determination of competence and material is purely come from me."

In the process of preparing the learning implementation plan, Special Guidance Teachers focus more on the learning method. These special tutors always take the cognitive abilities of slow learner students into their consideration, so that they can set up active learning methods

and involve all children. Another learning method proposed by the Special Guidance Teacher is peer teaching, where the normal students can actively participate in being a mentor for slow learner peers.

One lesson plan was implemented by PAI teachers together with Special Guidance Teachers in inclusive classes. What distinguished the learning between normal children and slow learner children was in the implementation stage, in which slow learner children were given with more attention than their normal peers and at the time of evaluation the level of acquisition for slow learner children was slightly lowered compared to normal children (Kistoro, 2021). For example, the passing score of 75 for normal children 75, hence a score of 65 for slow learner children considered a pass.

The implementation of inclusive class learning in these schools used a full inclusive class, where children with special needs learned together with other normal children throughout the day in regular classes using the same curriculum (Elisa & Wrastari, 2013). Therefore, as mentioned in the previous section, the Learning Implementation Plan applies to all children in the inclusive class.

Teachers who conducted learning in the inclusive class consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and Special Guidance Teachers who focused more on slow learner children. However, due to the limited number of Special Guidance Teachers, not every PAI lesson was always accompanied by a Special Guidance Teacher. A PAI teacher said this, "At the time of the implementation, I taught in front of the class by delivering material. Meanwhile, the special tutor was at the back of the class ready to assist the children with special needs. "

In addition to carrying out the learning process along with the subject teachers, Special Guiding Teachers also give treatment for students from other classes who experience obstacles while learning. For example, when a slow learner student screams in class and does not want to be silent, the teacher blocks the child by taking him to a particular room to be handled by the Special Assistance Teacher. This was in accordance with a narrative by one of the special guidance teachers who explained that,

“When a child with special needs is acting up, a special guidance teacher will handle him or her. However, if the special guidance teacher is not in the classroom, the child with special needs keeps screaming and disturbing his or her classmates. As a consequence, we often isolate them in a particular room where a special guidance teacher can handle them”.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning is basically the same as the learning implementation of other subjects. Religious teachers are sometimes accompanied by Special Guidance Teachers or sometimes alone in inclusive classes. At the time of observation, the teacher started the lesson by chanting prayers to begin the learning activity together; then, the teacher asked one of the students to read the pledge to keep the discipline and obey the rules, which then other students repeat.

Then the teacher presented the material with a small lecture and asked the students to open their respective books. In certain sections, the teacher asked one of the students to read on a specific page. And then, the teacher asked some questions to students to measure whether the material had been mastered or not.

PAI teachers provided equal opportunities between normal children and slow learner children. However, at the first questions, there are usually no or only few slow learner children could answer. Then the teacher repeated the material by presenting them in students' mother tongue, by using Javanese language that allowed for slow learner children to understand better.

Interviews with the PAI teachers also confirmed it. One of them stated, "Children with special needs often find it difficult to grasp the material directly, so teachers are required to be creative. Sometimes, explaining the material in verbal is not enough, so I show them films, or use gestures; I also make the language more accessible, like using my mother tongue or Javanese. So, I just can't keep talking in front of the class since children with special needs cannot receive the material well. "

Another teacher said, "I often have the children in the class to do warm up before the lesson begins; I give them ice breaking to let them be

refreshed so that they can regain their focus. I also often use video shows, gestures, give examples, and then continue. "

The PAI teachers also several times asked normal students who sat side by side with slow learner students to answer questions so that the SL child could hear their friend's answer. The teacher also gave the opportunity to a fellow junior high school student to repeat some of the material he had delivered (repetition). A teacher shared this strategy. "If someone still does not understand, he or she can ask questions, then I will explain again. I also often use peer learning, so a friend who sits next to him or her can answer some of the questions I give. Sometimes I also ask the student who sits next to the slow learner to repeat material I have delivered so that the Slow Learner child can accept and understand. It's probably because they have the same peer language level. "

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, learning activities take place by using media for communication, owned by all parents. The use of Android phones is a main medium. As one of the teachers stated, "For online learning, I use WA, Youtube, Google form. During this COVID period, I do not use a particular learning strategy, Sir, for I'm afraid that it will be too burdensome. Since other learning materials pose a lot of assignments, that will be too stressful for the students. During this period of time, I sort out the most important materials to teach. When I give them assignment, for example, I give them time to submit until 7 p.m. Some students completed the task, some others did not. Still, we try to understand them. And then, I had a discussion with the special guidance teacher about any slow learner students who hadn't done their assignments. The special guidance teacher made a video call and paid home visits to provide service to students with special needs (slow learners), since only those special tutors who get permission to conduct home visits. "

If the PAI learning process is carried out together with a special guidance teacher, that special tutor will give guidance or assist the slow learner students, those who are mostly having difficulty to concentrate. Slow learner students usually also have other abnormalities, such as

hyperactivity, making them difficult to control during the class. This is the time for the function of a special guidance teachers while accompanying PAI learning in inclusive classes. It is in accordance with the guidelines of organizing inclusive schools, in which the special guidance teachers must have the following competencies: 1) general ability, namely an ability required to educate learners in general (normal children); 2) basic ability, i.e. an ability required to educate students with special needs; and 3) specific ability, namely an ability required to educate students with certain types of special needs (specialized).

The PAI and GPK teachers always pay more attention to slow learner students during and throughout the learning process. This is very important because slow learner children have a lower ability to understand lessons than normal children. Slow learner children also need more motivation compared to their normal counterparts, so PAI and GPK teachers need something more to motivate or inspire them. As addressed by one of the teachers: "The way to assist children with special needs is to make them get interested when they start the class, make them focus on the subjects the class teacher will teach. The Special Guidance Teacher will re-explain the material that the classroom teacher had taught in an easier and understandable language for students and provide concrete examples".

The teacher needs to give an understanding to other normal students in advance, for they will give more attention to the SL children, hence to reduce any jealousy. The teacher has to explain that the purpose of learning in the class is so that all students can understand the material. Therefore, if any student already understands, they should be able to teach their friends who fell behind, and must be patient if they still haven't understood. However, if the classroom learning hours are up, and the slow learner children have not yet learned the subject matter, the PAI teacher and GPK will conduct special/remedial lessons for the slow learner children.

Learning evaluation is a tool to determine whether a lesson's planned competence has been achieved or not (Widyawati, 2017).



Evaluation is highly essential in the educational process. Evaluation is a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data obtained.

Evaluation of inclusive classes in this school was also performed together with the same questions between regular students and slow learner students. The difference is that the minimum achievement criteria (KKM) for slow learner students are lower than for normal children. For Islamic Religious Education subject, KKM for normal children was 75, while KKM for slow learner children was 70. With this decision, the achievement value of Islamic Education subject in inclusive class could be maximally achieved and all students passed the criteria.

One of the teachers said, "I do not demand a high standard for slow learner students regarding the problem of mastering material cognitively. I'm pursuing more into real practice. For example: Have the students obediently and orderly done the five-time prayer or not? For recitation material, if students with special needs are able to read and have the correct pronunciation, it can be categorized as good. The exam questions are the same for the normal students and students with special needs. However, the grade is lowered for those with special needs. It's goodly enough if they understand one or some materials, since it is too difficult for them to understand all the materials. I also differentiate the score for normal and students with special needs, for instance, scores of 65-70 are considered good for slow learner children. "

Obstacles often experienced by teachers during the implementation of learning process for slow learner children are, among others, the preparation of curriculum, suitable strategies, and another obstacle from other parties, namely parents who do not want their children to be included as children with special needs.

Curriculum is a standard guideline in the provision of materials in inclusive schools. This means that normal and children with special needs have the same curriculum. This condition requires teachers to be creative and innovative with a suitable strategy while maintaining to deliver materials according to existing curriculum to all students. This was

supported by the interview results with religious teachers who explained that, "As a PAI teacher, throughout the preparation process, such as making a Learning Implementation Plan, I do all the works and I prepare more material or content. Usually, I discuss with the Special Guidance Teacher about the most suitable method can be applied with this kind of material and competence. The Special Guidance Teacher will suggest a method, and if it's considered appropriate, we will prepare it, but if it seems less suitable, we will further discuss it".

Implementing curriculum requires high level of teachers' creativity to make the students understand the existing materials. Even though the provision of materials for slow learner students have the same curriculum applied for normal peers, the teachers set the standard for students' minimum achievement.

The ability of slow learner children is cognitively different from normal children. This ability ultimately affects the ability to reason and concentrate. Most of the slow learner students have lower concentration power. As described by one of the teachers, "The weaknesses posed by slow learner children in this school tend to be memory weaknesses, focus, and longer time to process information. Children with special needs in this school tend to be slow in learning, such as difficulty in reading, writing, focusing, and being late to submit assignments." Another religion teacher said that to overcome the problem of such slow learner children was, "At the beginning of learning we make an approach, always persuade, and always provide encouragement and motivation when assisting/mentoring the learning."

Another obstacle faced by teachers is the concentration and response of students with special needs. The children often did not respond at all. This makes it difficult for classroom teachers to teach. This condition was expressed by one of the religion teachers, "In my case, one of the obstacles was, for example, I have explained it in various ways and sometimes through learning outside the classroom. However, when I asked a question, they just kept quiet. I once did an experiment in class VI, I nudged one of my students, and he or she looked so surprised. It turned

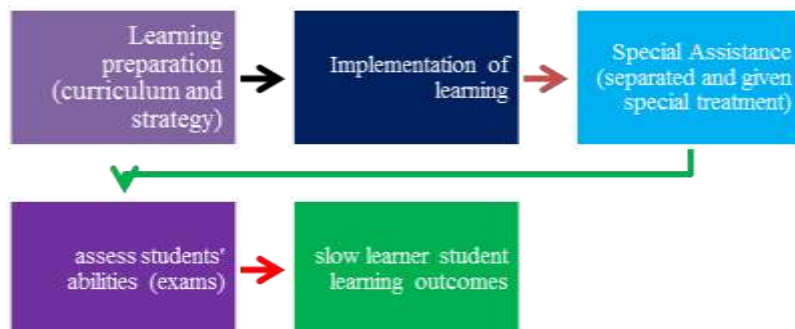
out that the child was daydreaming. The nudging stimulation to the slow learner child brought back their focus on the lesson."

One of the special guidance teachers added, "The weaknesses of slow learner children is in memory, focus, and longer time to process information. Learning during the COVID-19 period is somewhat different from during regular times. When delivering materials that tend to be difficult, special guidance teacher will communicate with parents and students by phone/video calls to explain the material more simply and easily understood. The special guidance teacher provides examples of how to work on questions so the students can do the assignments easily. How to submit the assignments, students usually send the assignments first to the special guidance teachers to be reviewed and checked. "

One of the obstacles of external factors faced by teachers and schools is that there are parents who do not accept their children fall into the category of children with special needs. It also makes it a little difficult for teachers to conduct learning, especially during the pandemic period, because the role of parents is minimal in accompanying (guiding) students when studying at home. This incident was experienced by one of the special guidance teachers during home visits, "Sometimes, the problem is not the children but the parents. They do not approve if their children are classified as Children with Special Needs, and some even got angry. We carefully and cautiously conveyed it and even we did not mention the remark of Children with Special Needs at all. We only said that if student A requires further assistance, and yes, it caused various perceptions on parents.

There is also another problem coming from classmates who are being mischievous or annoying when joking and sometimes mocking. One of the teachers said, "If special children have a good interaction with normal students both inside and outside the class, slow learner students can adjust to the association, the child sometimes looks more active by disturbing his friend, sometimes slow learner also get a little mockery like when being not fluent in reading."

Figure 1. Slow learner student learning strategies.



#### D. Discussion

The learning strategy of Islamic Religious Education subject for slow learners in inclusive schools begins with assessing. The children at the time of admission or enrolment. The following assessment is performed several months after the initiation of learning activities, and is conducted on students who have the characteristics of slow learners. The assessment will facilitate the implementation of learning that will be carried out. The next step is placing Slow Learner children in parallel classes and studying together with normal children.

The use of this assessment is in line with the findings of Lumaurrldo's research which states that a child's physical and psychological readiness will affect the transitional phase of a child entering more formal education. Improving children's school readiness is one of the most important goals of quality early childhood education. This study aims to explore the experience of early childhood educators in assessing the level of readiness of children to enter primary education. This research is a qualitative research using a phenomenological approach(Lumaurrldo et al., 2021).

The strategy implemented by religious teachers together with special guidance teachers is even applied since the making of Learning Implementation Plan, where materials and learning are determined in combination with active learning that enable peers to become mentors.

This is in line with Arjanggih's findings that through peer tutoring it is hoped that potential behavior will be awakened through organizing lecture material independently in the form of seeking help and providing assistance during the learning process takes place more intensively due to minimal psychological distance between tutor and tutee (Arjanggih & Suprihatin, 2010). The teachers asked students sit next to the SL students to repeat material had been delivered or to answer some of teacher's questions during the post-test. To improve the understanding of Slow Learner children, religious teachers also used an easier and more familiar language, namely the slow learner children's mother tongue (Javanese). Through active, creative learning with modification on KKM level of 75 for normal children and 70 for SL children at the time learning evaluation, class minimum achievement criteria could be achieved.

Related to any obstacle faced by the teachers and the special tutors, they always do joint coordination to make the class learning run smoothly well. One of the emphasis is good communication with the students, other teachers, or even the students. Understandably, good communication will create a good learning process as well. Strengthened by the results of Bosra's research which explains that the communication model in the educational process is the main thing, including education for children who experience psychological difficulties such as children with special needs. The required learning materials, methods and media are supported by a useful communication model to help advance religious education for autistic children (Bosra et al., 2020).

On the other hand, teachers and schools also give insight to the parents to keep guiding and monitoring their children. More particularly, in this pandemic condition, the cooperation between teachers, parents, and the environment is highly supportive of the learning successfulness either at school or at home.

## **E. Conclusion**

The inclusive school in Jogja which is the research sample has been implementing learning for slow learner children for 5 years. In practice

there are still many limitations and deficiencies in its management. The shortage of teachers who are competent and have educator certification for children with special needs, special curricula, and appropriate methods is a research finding that needs to be developed further. The input of students entering inclusive schools needs to be assessed specifically to determine students' abilities before entering learning. This is to find out the preparation of suitable strategies and methods.

Several strategies need to be improved with the aim of strengthening teacher competence through training, workshops and other activities that encourage teacher and school knowledge and improvements in managing slow learner students in inclusive schools. So far, all students in inclusive schools use the same curriculum so that it becomes an obstacle for teachers to convey material because of the limitations of slow learner students in understanding the material. They need more time, a comfortable atmosphere and emotional closeness to maintain their learning motivation. Finally, it is necessary to strengthen communication from the school, teachers and parents of students so that there is regular monitoring of student learning outcomes. Another goal that is no less important is to form a positive image from parents, schools, teachers and the community that slow learner students have their own strengths and weaknesses so that they also need to get the same learning in an educational context.

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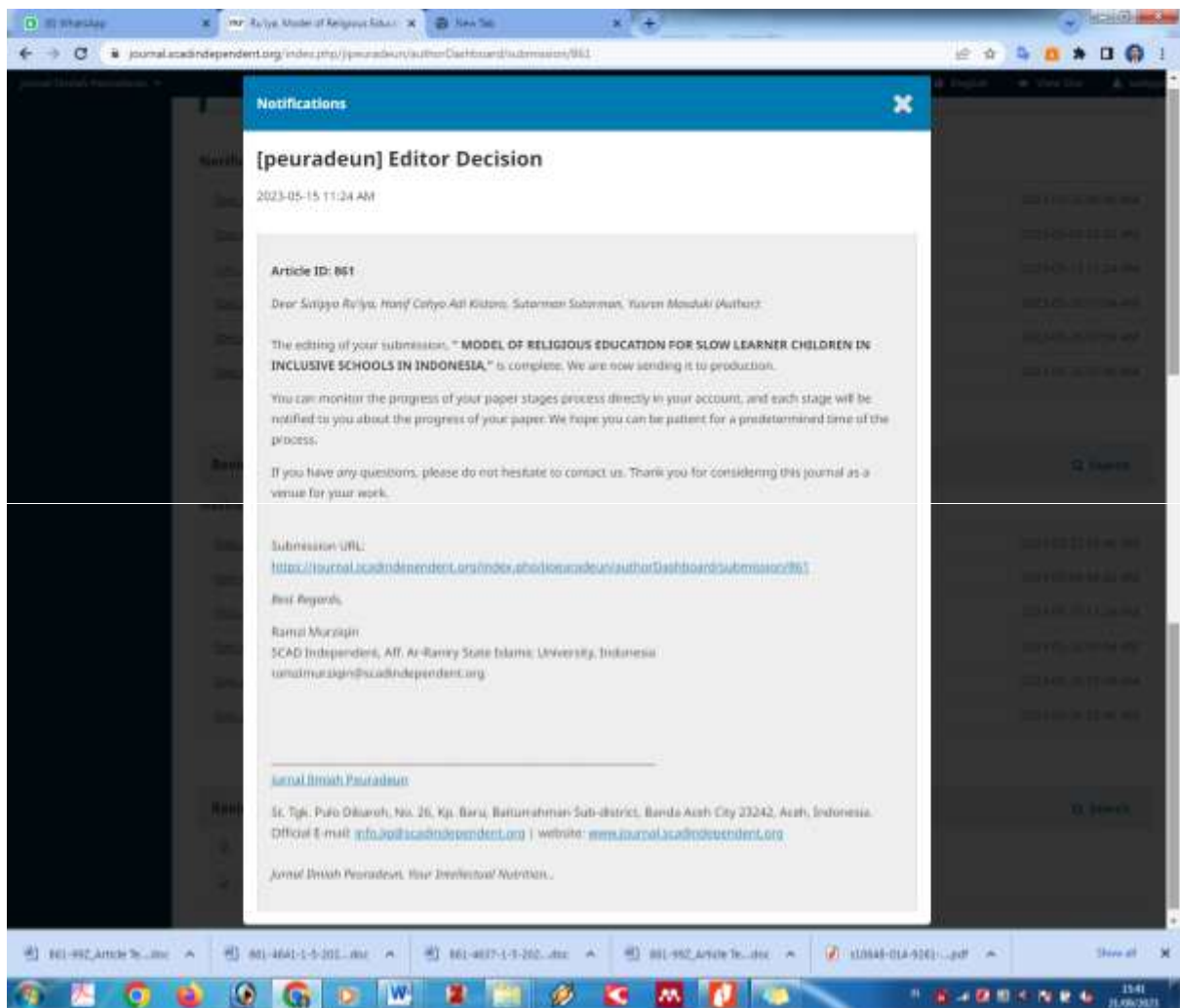
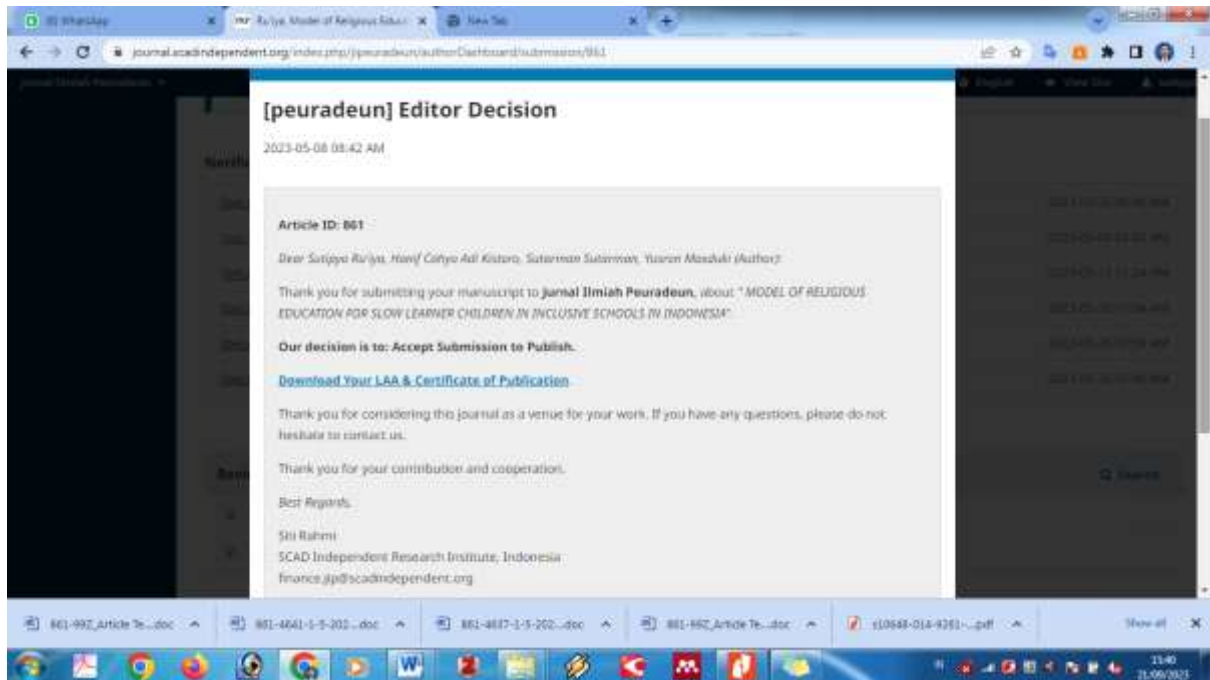
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