

TEACHER CHALLENGES IN TEACHING SLOW LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Teaching students with special needs, such as slow learners, is a major challenge in implementing inclusive education. Slow learners require a more focused and flexible learning approach to support their understanding of the material being taught. In primary schools, such as SD Negeri 2 Kalipetir, inclusive education plays a key role in ensuring that all students, including those with learning difficulties, can reach their full potential. The purpose of this study is to identify the approaches and strategies applied by teachers in teaching slow learner students in class V of SD Negeri 2 Kalipetir, assess the barriers faced, as well as the impact on student development. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research findings show that teachers use various strategies, such as adjusting learning materials, utilizing interactive media, and collaborating with parents. Despite limitations in terms of time and facilities, this approach proved effective in improving the understanding of material and social skills of slow learner students. This research makes an important contribution to the development of more effective inclusive learning strategies at the primary school level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main way to achieve a bright future. Education has a very crucial role in achieving success, both now and in the future (Nurfadillah et al., 2022). Education offers a wealth of knowledge and information that improves a person's life and behavior. A quality education is a right that everyone has, regardless of status, religion, ethnicity, race, or affiliation with a particular

group. Education is a consciously designed effort to create a learning environment and learning process that can encourage students to actively develop their potential. The main goal is to form students who have strong spirituality in religious aspects, the ability to control themselves, good personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills that are beneficial to themselves, society, nation and state. As a planned teaching and learning process, education aims to help students optimize their potential so that they can benefit others (Idatul Milla, 2018).

In this context, teachers play a very important role. Besides having to master the material being taught, teachers also act as facilitators to support the learning process effectively. Marsela Yulianti et al., (2022) said that teachers have an important role in optimizing the implementation of education and learning in schools. According to Salsabilah et al., (2021), teachers have an important role in shaping students' character and skills. They actively contribute to improving the competence of human resources (HR) as well as the personal quality of students. Faiz & Purwati (2022) also added that teachers have the responsibility and authority to organize education in schools, including guiding students to understand and apply applicable values.

However, in carrying out their role, teachers face many challenges, especially in the context of inclusive education. Law No 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities Article 10 states that persons with disabilities are entitled to quality education in various types, channels and levels of education, both inclusive and special. One of the main challenges is teaching students with special needs, including slow learners. Khayati (2016) says that slow learners are children with intelligence levels slightly below average (IQ 70-90) who need special education services in order to understand lessons optimally. Slow learner students often have difficulty understanding subject matter at the same pace as other students. They require a more intensive learning approach and additional time to understand and complete tasks.

This condition creates its own challenges at SD Negeri 2 Kalipetir, especially in class V which has 23 students, including one student with slow learner special needs. Based on the results of internship 2 observations, assessment results, and interviews with the fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Fiansi Prabawati, S.Pd, on December 12, 2024, it is known that the student often faces difficulties in understanding lessons and requires more attention from the teacher. Unfortunately, this school does not have a special assistant teacher, so the responsibility falls entirely on the class teacher.

To overcome this challenge, teachers need to implement creative and inclusive learning strategies, such as the use of differentiated methods, learning aids, and collaboration with parents and related agencies. In addition, teachers must also be able to effectively manage time and attention in the classroom so that the needs of all students can be met. This approach is important to ensure that slow learner students get a proper education without neglecting other students.

The formulation of the problems in this study includes how the approaches and strategies used by teachers in teaching slow learner learners, what are the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers in their learning process, and how the impact of learning on the development of slow learner learners. This study aims to identify the approaches and strategies applied by teachers in teaching slow learner learners, analyze the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers, and evaluate the impact of learning on the development of slow learner learners, both in terms of material understanding, motivation, behavior, and learning skills.

By understanding the approaches, constraints and impacts of learning, it is hoped that this research can make a real contribution to improving the quality of inclusive education for slow learner students. In addition, the results of this study can also serve as a reference for teachers and educational institutions to formulate more effective strategies.

2. METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method that focuses on producing descriptions, explanations, and in-depth and detailed descriptions of the topic under study. According to Albi Anggito (2018), descriptive research is presented through quotations obtained from the field, in accordance with the main focus of the research. This statement is in line with the opinion of Sholikhah (1970) which states that the stages in qualitative research include orientation or description, reduction or concentration, and selection to produce meaningful information.

This research was conducted at SDN 2 Kalipetir, which is located in Cumetuk, Kedungsari, Pengasih District, Kulon Progo Regency. The population in this study were all fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Kalipetir, totaling 23 students, including students with special needs slow learners. The selection of this location was based on the experience of the researcher who had previously interned at the school. During the internship, the researcher identified several problems faced by the school, one of which was the presence of slow learner students. Based on these observations, the researcher decided to learn more about the approaches and strategies applied by teachers in assisting slow learner students, analyze the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers, and evaluate the impact of learning on the development of slow learner students, both in terms of material understanding, motivation, behavior, and learning skills.

The subject of this research is the fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Finansi, who was chosen as the main resource person because she has a direct role in the learning process of slow learner students. The research sample consisted of a slow learner student in class V, who was selected based on the results of observation and relevance to the research topic, as well as the class V teacher who has a direct role in assisting the student. The class teacher was also seen as the one who best understood the data and information relevant to the research. The object of this research is a slow learner in class V.

This study aims to identify the approaches and strategies applied by teachers in learning slow learner students, analyze the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers, and evaluate the impact of learning on the development of slow learner students. This development is analyzed from various aspects, such as material understanding, motivation, behavior, and learning skills.

Data collection in this study was carried out through three main techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted using non-participatory methods, where researchers observed the learning process without being directly involved. Interviews were conducted with the fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Finansi, to explore in-depth information about learning strategies, obstacles, and the impact of learning on slow learner students. Documentation includes photographs of learning activities as supporting data. The following is a table of interview grids used for data collection.

The interviews in this study focused on three main aspects, namely the approaches and strategies applied by teachers, the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers, and the impact and development

of students. Each aspect was then detailed into questions that would be asked to the interviewees during the interview process. Thus, this study uses data triangulation, which is the use of more than one data collection method in a single case. This data triangulation includes checking data from various sources, through various means, and at different times. For data analysis, researchers used the data analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Ramadhani, 2023).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following is a grid and the results of interviews with the fifth grade teacher of SDN 2 Kalipetir by Mrs. Finansi Prabawati, S.Pd.,

No.	Aspect	Question	Answer
1	Teachers' Approaches and Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you prepare before teaching slow learner learners? What methods or strategies do you use to help them understand the subject matter? 2. What methods or strategies do you use to help them understand the subject matter? 3. Does the teacher use special media or tools? If yes, please give examples. 4. How do teachers try to increase the learning motivation of slow learner learners? 5. Do teachers involve other parties, such as parents or counselors, in their learning process? If yes, what is the form of collaboration? 6. What actions or efforts have teachers taken? Has it been successful or not? 	<p>First, I prepare materials for all students, especially for students with special needs, the level is lowered according to the student's ability.</p> <p>I look at the slow learner's ability first and the game adjusts to the slow learner's ability to follow the lesson and I rarely use the lecture method.</p> <p>Yes, I use learning media for the process of delivering the material, maybe I often use the media during Mathematics, IPAS, and Indonesian lessons, if for other lessons it might adjust to the material.</p> <p>I continue to encourage and motivate the student, because the student is still difficult in reading and counting, I ask his friends to help with reading and counting.</p> <p>Due to the limited number of counselors in this school, so I asked the parents of these slow learner students to help with their development at home, I also asked to continue to be motivated to continue to be enthusiastic and not feel differentiated.</p> <p>The efforts I have made so far are like trying to convey the same material but with different methods or ways, of course, which are easily understood by these slow learner students. For my</p>

			target, it is not grandiose, because the student is quiet I target to be able to socialize with his friends, then be able to sweep, draw, and distinguish vowels and consonants.
2	Obstacles and Challenges Faced by Teachers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the main obstacles you face when teaching slow learners? 2. How do you deal with the difference in learning speed between slow learners and other students in the class? 3. Do teachers experience difficulties in designing or customizing lesson materials for slow learner learners? If so, what are the difficulties? 4. How do teachers manage time and attention in the classroom, especially if slow learners need more intensive guidance? 	<p>Maybe the obstacle I feel is because I am not equipped with the methods to teach slow learner students, but I also try to serve these students according to my abilities.</p> <p>I still give the same material, it's just that I differentiate in the number of questions worked on, for example, his friends work on 10 questions, the student works on 5 to 7 numbers only.</p> <p>Of course there are difficulties, the difficulties I feel are like preparing the right method for these slow learner students, then the way of delivery is difficult.</p> <p>My job is to accompany them, but sometimes I neglect it because I'm taking care of others, especially during math lessons when I always go around to check their work.</p>
3	Learner Impact and Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do teachers assess the learning progress of slow learner learners during the learning process? 2. Were they able to achieve the targets that the teacher set? If so, what were the achievements? 3. What are the positive changes seen in slow learner learners, both in material understanding, behavior, and learning skills? 4. According to the teacher, what are the indicators of success in 	<p>The way I assess these slow learner students may be like with grades, then by observing their development, and from behavior.</p> <p>For now, I think I have reached the target that I set for these slow learner students. Maybe if you reduce supervision, you can.</p> <p>Currently, there have been improvements such as being able to socialize with his friends, and being able to joke a little with his friends, starting to open up and not being too quiet. For academics there has also been an improvement and has been able to follow the learning.</p> <p>The indicators that I make for these slow learner students are not too high, maybe like there is a good</p>

learning for slow learner improvement, and the main thing is like
learners? being able to write and draw.

Table 1. Results of Interview with Class V Teacher



Figure 1. Classroom Learning Activities



Figure 2. Interview with Class V Teacher

Based on interview data, observation results, and documentation results, grade V teachers at SDN 2 Kalipetir adapt an inclusive learning approach to support slow learner students. Teachers try to create a learning environment that allows students with special needs to develop according to their abilities. This approach includes customizing materials, using creative methods, learning media and close collaboration with parents to ensure continuity between school and home learning. With this approach, teachers can ensure that each student receives equal attention and can learn at their own pace. For example, the teacher said, “I prepare materials that suit the student's ability, bringing it down to a level that is easier to understand,” to ensure deeper understanding and create student confidence. Therefore, every step the teacher takes aims to overcome the barriers that slow learner students face in their learning process, so that they can participate optimally in teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

To support these needs, teachers at SDN 2 Kalipetir pay special attention to adjusting learning materials for slow learner students. Although the learning materials are generally uniform for all students, teachers develop specially designed Learner Worksheets (LKPD) so that slow learners can understand the material more easily and effectively. This includes reducing the complexity of the material without changing the core of the learning, so that students can still gain an understanding that is in accordance with the established educational standards. Such adjustments aim to assist slow learner students in overcoming the learning difficulties they face, without compromising the quality of education received. Muliawati (2023) emphasized that this kind of adjustment is very important to ensure that students with special needs can still follow the learning and not be left behind in the learning process. Furthermore, this adjustment is also applied in the number of assignments given. If regular students receive ten questions, slow learner students are only given five to seven questions to reduce their burden, so they can focus and not feel pressured by too many tasks. The teacher explained, “I still give the same material, only the number of questions is different,” which shows that despite the adjustments, slow learner students are still given challenges that are equal to their abilities. Muliawati's (2023) research supports this approach, stating that reducing task load can help slow learner students focus and understand the material more easily, as well as reduce the anxiety or frustration often experienced by them in dealing with school tasks.

Furthermore, teachers use a variety of creative methods that have proven effective in making it easier for slow learner students to understand the material. One of the methods applied is role play, which helps students learn through direct experience and social interaction. This method is very useful for developing social skills, as well as giving students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in a more real and fun context. Teachers also use educational games and fun learning videos to create an interesting and interactive learning atmosphere. In this way, students are not just passively receiving information, but are actively involved in the learning process. This approach is in line with Anisa et al.'s research, (2023) which shows that role playing is effective for teaching moral values to slow learner students, while strengthening their understanding of the subject matter. In addition, this method provides an opportunity for students to practice other important skills, such as public speaking and working together in groups. The teacher said, "I rarely use the lecture method, more often adjusting games or other methods to make students more interested," which illustrates how important a varied approach is in attracting the attention of slow learner students. The use of learning media is also an important part of this strategy, especially for subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Indonesian. Varied learning media, such as pictures, videos and props, help students understand abstract concepts more easily and enjoyably. Nurfadhillah et al., (2021) state that the use of visual and interactive media is very effective in supporting the understanding of slow learner students, because it can clarify material that is difficult to understand and make learning more interesting.

However, even though various strategies have been implemented, teachers still face a big challenge in providing sufficient time to pay attention to slow learner students. With a large number of students in the class, teachers find it difficult to provide intensive individualized guidance, even though each student needs more attention. The teacher said, "I always go around to check students' work, including slow learner students," although this requires the teacher to be more efficient in time management. In addition, the lack of special training on how to teach slow learner students is an obstacle in itself. Noni (2021) mentioned the importance of specific training for teachers to face this challenge, because with the right skills, teachers can optimize students' learning process and design more effective learning. Without adequate training, teachers may feel less confident in working with slow learners. Teachers try to teach slow learners with the method that best suits their needs. However, teachers still strive to provide equitable learning so that slow learners are not left behind and can still develop optimally.

In addition, teachers also face difficulties in designing learning methods that suit the characteristics and abilities of slow learner students. This includes delivering material effectively and keeping learning interesting so that students do not feel bored or pressured. Slow learner students often require more detailed explanations and the use of various strategies to overcome their limited understanding. Annisa et al., (2023) emphasized the importance of more structured methods, such as detailed explanations or demonstrations, to support slow learner students' learning, so that they can more easily understand and remember the material taught.

Despite these challenges, the results are encouraging and show that this approach has had a significant positive impact. Slow learner students at SDN 2 Kalipetir showed significant progress in academic aspects. Teachers noted that students have achieved the prescribed learning targets, including the ability to recognize vowels and consonants and other basic skills that are important indicators in their academic development. Firdaus (2021) mentioned that adjustments in the assessment of slow learner students are very important to accommodate their needs, so that the assessment can be more fair and in accordance with the conditions of each student. The teacher said, "for now, I think I have reached the target I set for these slow learner students. Maybe if you reduce supervision, you can do it," which shows that they are starting to be able to do tasks independently, although they still need constant guidance.

In addition to academic progress, students also showed improvement in their socialization skills and creativity. Teachers noted that students became more open, active and confident in interacting with their peers at school. Ailulia & Widiyono (2021) highlights the importance of environmental support, both from teachers and classmates, to encourage slow learner students' social skills. With a supportive environment, students feel more comfortable to develop their social skills without fear or anxiety. The teacher said, “at this time there has been an improvement, such as being able to socialize with his friends, and being able to joke a little with his friends,” which shows that an inclusive approach not only develops students' academic skills, but also their social skills. Students' creativity is also developing, as seen in their ability to write, draw, and express their ideas more freely and creatively. Putri et al., (2023) mentioned that the creativity of slow learner students can be seen through their ability to express ideas through various media, such as colors and shapes, which are important tools in their learning process. This process also helps them hone their fine motor skills and increase their confidence in expressing themselves.

Overall, the learning strategies implemented at SDN 2 Kalipetir prove that inclusive and adaptive approaches can have a significant positive impact on slow learners. The adaptation of materials, use of creative methods, collaboration with parents, and focus on social development and creativity are effective in supporting the needs of the whole student. Although there are still challenges such as limited time, resources and specialized training, the efforts made by teachers have shown significant results in improving the quality of student learning. By continuing to develop more innovative strategies and approaches, it is hoped that slow learner students can achieve their full potential in an inclusive, supportive and caring learning environment. In the future, there needs to be more attention from the school and government to improve the quality of training for teachers and provide more adequate facilities to support quality inclusive education, so that every child, without exception, can achieve success in education.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that teachers at SD Negeri 2 Kalipetir implement an adaptive approach for slow learner students, by adjusting learning materials, methods, and media according to student needs. Teachers use strategies such as role play and peer tutors, and involve parents in monitoring student development at home. Despite facing challenges such as limited time and facilities, the learning has shown positive results, with students making progress in both social and academic aspects.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that further training for teachers be provided to improve their competence in developing and implementing more inclusive learning strategies. This training could include mastering innovative learning methods, adaptive classroom management techniques, as well as the utilization of technology in learning. In addition, facility improvements, such as the provision of appropriate learning aids and supportive infrastructure, need to be addressed to create a conducive learning environment. Further research is also recommended to identify learning strategies that are more effective in supporting the development of slow learners in various educational contexts.

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