



## **The Role of Classroom Teachers in Supporting the Learning Process of Elementary School Students with Speech Delay**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to describe and analyze the role of classroom teachers in supporting the learning process of children with special needs (CWSN) experiencing speech delay in an inclusive public elementary school. The background of this research is based on the importance of inclusive education and preliminary findings regarding the limited structural support available in the school. The research method employed was qualitative descriptive, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that classroom teachers play a crucial role by implementing personalized strategies, adaptive communication, and collaboration with parents, despite the absence of specialized learning systems or professional support such as special education assistants. Challenges encountered include a lack of professional training, the absence of an adaptive curriculum, and limited supporting facilities. This study emphasizes the pivotal role of classroom teachers as primary facilitators in bridging the needs of children with special needs and creating an inclusive learning environment. It also highlights the necessity of systemic support from educational institutions to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive practices.*

**Keywords:** Classroom Teachers; Speech Delay; Children With Special Needs

### **1. Introduction**

Elementary education is very important for children because it provides the foundation for teaching how to behave in everyday life. Education is also a basic need for every child from an early age until they reach adulthood. In addition, education is equally necessary for children with special needs since it can improve their knowledge, especially in language development, and give them equal learning opportunities within their environment. In elementary schools, inclusive education requires the active role of classroom teachers in supporting learning success for all students, including children with special needs who experience speech delay (Adolph, 2024). Children with speech delay encounter communication challenges that may affect their social and academic

development. Identif (2025) also explains that classroom teachers hold a strategic role in creating a supportive learning environment through the adaptation of teaching methods, the use of appropriate media, and collaboration with parents as well as other professionals.

Preliminary observations at SDN Pangarangan V show that some teachers have begun to apply individualized approaches in the learning process of children with speech delay. However, challenges still remain, such as the lack of professional training and limited supporting resources. This situation indicates the need to further evaluate and strengthen the role of classroom teachers in inclusive learning practices. In general, this research aims to support the learning process of students with special needs who experience speech delay in the inclusive educational setting of SDN Pangarangan V.

This study is expected to contribute insights into educating children with special needs who experience speech delay, while also enhancing understanding of strategies, challenges, and adaptations carried out by classroom teachers in addressing existing limitations. Furthermore, it aims to illustrate how teachers take an active role in delivering lessons that can attract students' interest and sharpen the abilities of children with speech delay. Research conducted by Mariam and Rahayu (2024) emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role in increasing the learning motivation of children with speech delay by providing guidance that is clear and easy to understand. Teachers are also required to adapt methods and learning media to support the development of children's language skills.

A previous study by Khaerunnisa et al. (2024) entitled "*The Role of Teachers in Supporting Children with Speech Delay at TKS Bina Cendekia Pamulang*" highlights the role of early childhood education teachers in a non-inclusive environment. The study reveals that teachers applied affective approaches to children with speech delay, although they faced challenges due to limited training and the absence of special education assistants. The similarity with the present study at SDN Pangarangan V lies in its focus on the role of teachers in assisting children with speech delay. The difference, however, is that this research was conducted in an inclusive elementary school and explores more deeply the strategies of individualized learning and the challenges of implementing inclusive practices. The novelty of this study is found in the context of a public elementary school that operates with limited resources to support children with special needs inclusively. In addition, Mawarni (2023) also discusses the strategies of teachers in inclusive elementary schools in supporting children with speech delay. The study shows that teachers employed personal approaches such as physical touch, rewards, and individualized communication, while also applying flexible academic standards.

The similarity with this study lies in the context of inclusive elementary schools and the focus on strategies as well as the role of teachers in assisting children with speech delay. The difference is that Mawarni conducted her research in a private Islamic school with a specific case study, whereas this study was carried out in a public school with limited inclusive practices and highlights the broader role of teachers within the constraints of minimal structural support. The novelty of this research is its emphasis on the dynamics of classroom teachers in dealing with the lack of systemic support in inclusive public schools. Meanwhile, research conducted by Rika Widianita (2023) at RA Tadika Adnani

examined the strategies of early childhood education teachers in supporting children with speech delay aged five to six years through direct instruction, verbal and nonverbal interaction, and intensive guidance. The similarity with the present study lies in the use of a qualitative approach and the emphasis on teacher interventions for children with speech delay. The difference, however, is that Widianita's study was conducted in a non-inclusive early childhood institution, while this research was carried out in an inclusive elementary school (SDN Pangarangan V).

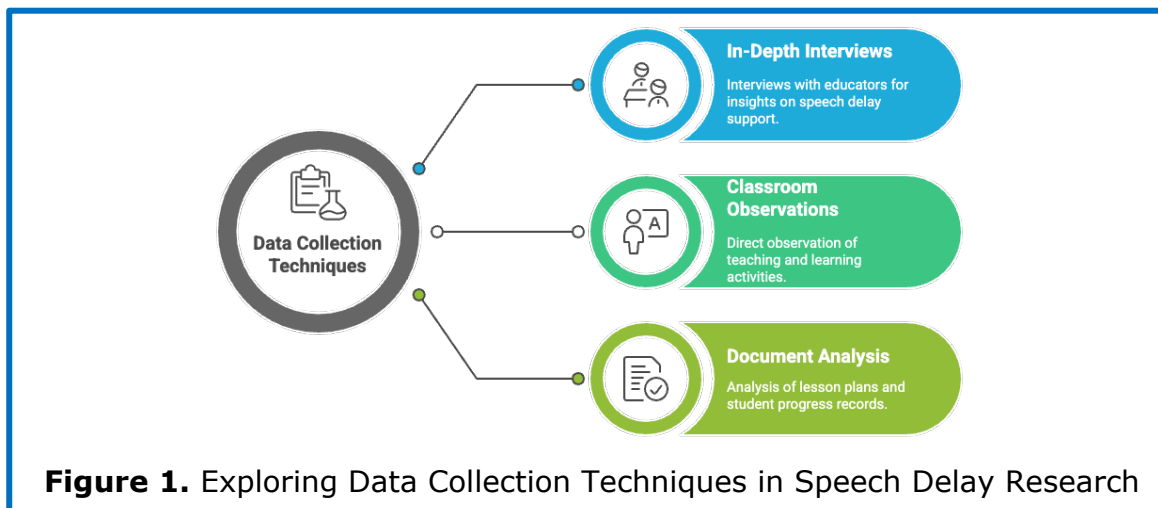
The novelty of this study is situated in the context of inclusive elementary education in public schools with limited support systems, highlighting the role of classroom teachers as the main facilitators who bridge students with special needs and the learning environment as well as external resources. According to Mel Ainscow and Tony Booth (2006), inclusive education is not merely about placing children with special needs, such as those with speech delay, in regular schools. Rather, it is a comprehensive process of transforming the culture, policies, and practices of schools. The goal is to provide students with comfort in learning and to create engaging classrooms that encourage them to participate more actively in the learning process. The teacher's role is therefore essential in adjusting teaching methods to ensure the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

Vygotsky (1978) also explains that a child's ability to learn is not solely determined by what they can accomplish independently but is also influenced by the support provided by significant others, such as family members. This concept, known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), refers to the distance between the child's current development and the potential development achievable with guidance. In the context of inclusive education, particularly for children with speech delay, the role of the teacher is crucial as a guide who provides direction, assistance, and motivation.

This support enables children to gradually develop their communication and academic abilities independently. In other words, the interventions and facilitation provided by teachers today will help children build self-reliance in the future. The selection of research subjects focusing on students with speech delay at SDN Pangarangan V was based on preliminary findings that some children with special needs still experience barriers in speaking and verbal communication within inclusive regular classrooms. Although teachers have attempted to implement individualized approaches in the learning process, various challenges remain, including the lack of professional training, limited supporting facilities, and the absence of special education assistants. These conditions reflect a gap between the policy of inclusive education and its practical implementation in the field, particularly in public schools that are not fully equipped to optimally support children with special needs. Furthermore, a review of previous studies shows that most similar research has been conducted in both formal and non-formal educational settings. However, studies that specifically examine the role of classroom teachers in public elementary schools within the context of inclusive education for children with speech delay are still limited. This fact reinforces the urgency and relevance of the present study in filling the research gap at the elementary education level.

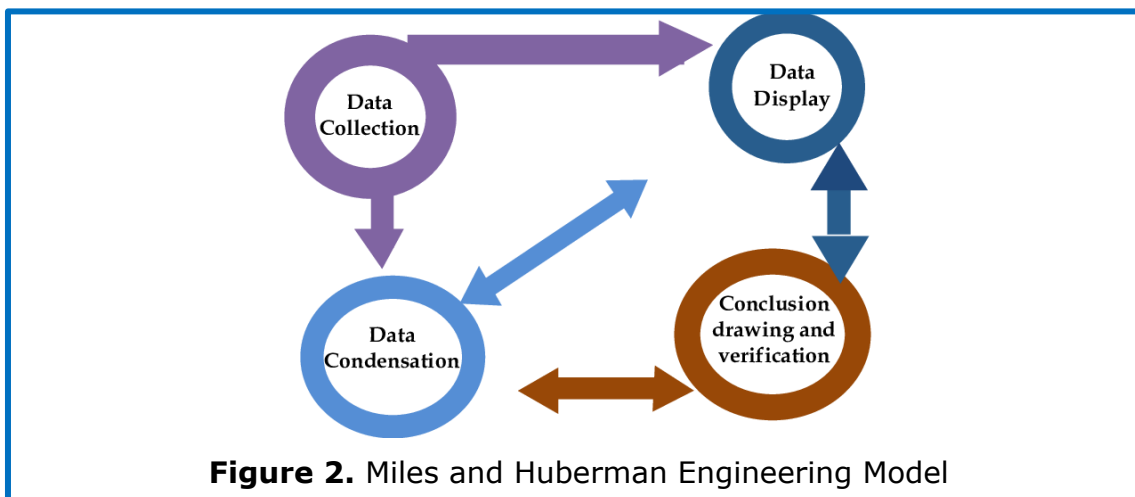
## 2. Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method aimed at examining in depth the role of teachers in addressing students with speech delay within the context of inclusive elementary education. This approach was considered appropriate because it allows the exploration of complex social dynamics that occur in real-life situations. The selection of research subjects was carried out purposively, by determining informants deemed relevant to the study.



**Figure 1.** Exploring Data Collection Techniques in Speech Delay Research

The data in this study were collected through several techniques to ensure the depth and accuracy of the findings. In-depth interviews were conducted with classroom teachers, special education assistants (GPK), and the school principal to obtain comprehensive insights regarding their roles, strategies, and challenges in supporting students with speech delay. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences while still maintaining focus on the research objectives. In addition, classroom observations were carried out to directly examine teaching and learning activities, including the interaction between teachers and students with speech delay. Document analysis was also conducted, focusing on lesson plans (RPP) and student progress records, in order to validate and enrich the information obtained from interviews and observations. The combination of these data collection techniques enabled triangulation, which strengthened the credibility and validity of the research findings.



**Figure 2.** Miles and Huberman Engineering Model

The process of data analysis in this study followed the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consist of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and simplifying information obtained from interviews, observations, and document reviews to focus on the most relevant aspects of the teacher's role in supporting students with speech delay. The data were then organized and displayed in a structured manner to facilitate interpretation and provide a clear overview of patterns and relationships that emerged during the study. To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing information from different sources and time periods. Previous information was cross-checked with current data to confirm consistency and accuracy. This process not only strengthened the reliability of the data but also provided a deeper understanding of how classroom teachers adapt their strategies to support the development of students with speech delay. Through this approach, the analysis yielded findings that are both credible and meaningful for improving inclusive practices in elementary education.

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Findings**

The results of this study indicate that classroom teachers at SDN Pangarangan V have made meaningful efforts to support students with speech delay, even in the absence of formal inclusive education support systems. In terms of learning planning, teachers had not yet developed specific lesson plans or adaptive curricula for students with speech delay, which limited the formal structure of inclusive practices. However, they attempted to create learning experiences that allowed students to participate more actively. With regard to strategies and learning methods, teachers relied on personal approaches, such as direct interaction and limited use of visual media, to build students' confidence and engagement. The findings also highlight that teacher-student communication patterns played a crucial role in fostering a supportive learning environment. Teachers used simple, clear language and demonstrated patience and empathy, which helped children feel more comfortable expressing themselves. In terms of support and accommodation, although institutional resources such as special education assistants or speech therapy were not available, teachers collaborated with parents through regular communication and progress reports. Finally, in evaluation and monitoring, teachers assessed not only academic achievement but also attitudes, participation, and social development. These evaluations, though mostly based on intuition and not systematically documented, provided valuable insights for adjusting instructional approaches and supported the overall growth of students with speech delay.

#### **Learning Planning**

Based on the findings at SDN Pangarangan V, it was revealed that classroom teachers had not yet developed specific lesson plans tailored for students with speech delay. There were no curriculum adjustments or individualized learning plans (such as an IEP) designed to meet the needs of children with special needs. This indicates that although the school institutionally accepts children with special needs, there is still no flexible learning system in place to accommodate the communication difficulties they experience. The absence of adaptive learning programs has become a significant barrier to maximizing students' learning processes. Although there is no formal policy or

support such as the presence of special education assistants, teachers still make efforts to apply the principles of inclusion. They provide opportunities for students with speech delay to participate more actively during classroom activities. Such efforts, even when carried out informally, demonstrate that inclusive education practices are still being implemented, and they play an important role in ensuring that children with speech delay are engaged in the learning process.

### **Strategies and Learning Methods**

Although no specific strategies were formally designed, teachers at SDN Pangarangan V still made efforts to create an inclusive learning environment through personal approaches. Direct interaction with students became the main strategy in building their confidence and participation. Occasionally, teachers also used visual media to support students' understanding, although the use of such media was still limited and had not yet been integrated as a consistent part of daily learning practices. Teachers' efforts to involve students were intended to help them communicate effectively with their peers, thereby fostering not only classroom interaction but also broader social engagement. Children with speech delay were given opportunities to develop themselves in class and to take part in various activities without restrictions on their participation. These efforts reflect the teachers' commitment to ensuring that inclusive practices are implemented, even in the absence of formal systems or structured support.

### **Teacher–Student Communication Patterns**

Communication is a crucial aspect in supporting children with speech delay. Teachers at SDN Pangarangan V demonstrated an understanding of students' conditions by using simple and easily understandable language along with a friendly attitude. This approach helped children feel more comfortable in the learning process. When students had difficulty expressing their ideas, teachers provided both verbal and nonverbal encouragement with patience and empathy. Although they had not received specific training, teachers made efforts to build adaptive and supportive communication. This strategy proved to be important in strengthening the social relationships of children, both with their teachers and with their classmates. Such communication practices played a key role in fostering confidence and participation among students with speech delay within the inclusive classroom environment.

### **Support and Accommodation**

From the perspective of institutional support, the school had not yet provided more specific services such as the presence of special education assistants, speech therapy, or collaboration with special schools (SLB). This condition has become a barrier to delivering more comprehensive services for children with speech delay. Nevertheless, teachers continued to bridge the students' needs by maintaining regular communication with parents. Teachers involved parents by providing progress reports on the child's development and creating space for discussion so that parents could also support their child's learning at home. Although not yet ideal, this effort reflected the teachers' concern and commitment to building collaboration between the school and families in order to enhance the learning process of children with speech delay.

## **Evaluation and Monitoring**

The evaluation of learning, teachers at SDN Pangarangan V not only assessed academic abilities but also paid attention to students' attitudes, participation, and social development. The assessments were conducted periodically, and the results were shared with parents as a form of transparency and to encourage family involvement in the educational process. The evaluation results were then used by teachers to adjust their teaching approaches, although the adjustments were still based largely on intuition and had not been systematically documented. Nevertheless, these evaluations had a positive impact, as children with speech delay were still able to progress to the next grade level and demonstrated development in line with their potential. Overall, although the school did not yet have a formal support system for students with speech delay, teachers at SDN Pangarangan V demonstrated care and inclusivity through personal efforts. Their ability to recognize and respond to students' individual needs became the key to creating a welcoming and supportive learning environment. However, improvements in planning, teacher training, and institutional support remain essential in order to implement inclusive education more effectively and sustainably.

## **3.2 Discussion**

The findings of this study confirm that classroom teachers play a central role in supporting the learning process of students with speech delay in inclusive elementary schools. Although specific learning plans such as individualized education programs (IEPs) were not developed, teachers showed initiative by creating learning opportunities that encouraged active student participation. This illustrates that even in the absence of formal support systems, teachers still attempted to practice inclusive values in their classrooms.

The absence of adaptive curricula and special instructional design reflects a gap between inclusive education policies and their implementation at the school level. This gap suggests that schools may accept students with special needs administratively, but pedagogical practices often rely heavily on teachers' personal initiatives. Such conditions may limit the potential for more systematic and sustainable inclusive practices. In terms of teaching strategies and methods, teachers preferred direct interaction and occasional use of visual media to facilitate understanding among students with speech delay. Although these methods were effective to some degree, their limited application shows the need for further training and resource provision. Personalized approaches remain a key factor in building students' confidence and ensuring that they are not marginalized in classroom activities.

Communication patterns between teachers and students emerged as an essential component of the learning process. Teachers' use of simple language, friendly attitudes, and empathetic responses allowed students with speech delay to feel secure in expressing themselves. These adaptive communication strategies not only supported academic development but also contributed to social integration with peers, which is a critical aspect of inclusive education. Support and accommodation provided by teachers were largely informal, as institutional backing such as speech therapy services, collaboration with special schools, or special education assistants were not available. Despite these limitations, teachers maintained regular communication with parents, involving them through progress reports and discussions. This collaboration demonstrated

a shared responsibility between school and family, which compensated for the absence of formal systemic support.

Evaluation and monitoring of students with speech delay were conducted by teachers not only on academic performance but also on aspects such as participation, attitude, and social development. Although these assessments were intuitive and not systematically documented, they served as an important tool for teachers to adjust their instructional approaches. The positive outcomes, such as students' ability to advance to the next grade level, demonstrate that teachers' personal commitment significantly influenced learning outcomes.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of teacher involvement in inclusive classrooms. Research by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) highlighted that inclusive pedagogy requires teachers to adopt flexible strategies that support the participation of all learners, including those with speech and language difficulties. Similarly, Smith and Tyler (2010) noted that differentiated instruction and adaptive communication are essential in ensuring that students with special needs are actively engaged in classroom activities. The results of this study also align with the theoretical framework of Bruner (1996), particularly his concept of scaffolding, which explains how teachers can provide structured guidance that gradually enables students to achieve independent learning. Moreover, Booth and Ainscow (2011) emphasized that inclusive education should be viewed as a process of restructuring school culture and policies to respond effectively to student diversity. The lack of systemic support in the context of this study highlights the urgency of institutional transformation to sustain teachers' inclusive practices.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study highlights the critical role of classroom teachers in supporting children with speech delay within inclusive elementary education settings, particularly at SDN Pangarangan V. Although the school has not yet established formal support systems such as special education assistants, adaptive curricula, or therapeutic services, classroom teachers have sought to implement inclusive practices informally through personal strategies, adaptive communication, and collaboration with parents. Teachers demonstrated concern for the individual needs of students with speech delay, both in classroom learning processes and in social interactions outside the classroom. However, the implementation of inclusive education continues to face challenges, including limited professional training, a lack of resources, and the absence of specialized policies for students with special needs. The role of classroom teachers in public elementary schools, therefore, exists within the context of an inclusive framework that is not yet fully supported by systemic structures. This study provides empirical contributions to understanding how teachers address structural limitations through creativity, empathy, and collaboration, while also reinforcing the need for systemic support to ensure that inclusive education can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

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