

# Practices and Challenges of Inclusive Education In Indonesian Higher Education<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

All forms and levels of education established in the community aim at providing learners with knowledge, skills and values needed for them in the future. Therefore, education is pertained to be every individual's basic needs and rights, and it is important for all parties, i.e. government, private sectors as well as community to facilitate the fulfilment of education. Education is aspired for all learners regardless of her or his conditions and potentials. Everyone has equal opportunity to access education. In spite of the fact, some of the learners could not access good quality of education, due to physical and mental impairment or socio-economically disadvantaged. For this reason, establishment of inclusive education is important. Inclusive education aims at providing opportunity to all learners with different abilities and background to access good quality of education. The need of implementation of inclusive education in higher education has increased in accordance with the increasing demand of inclusive education in lower level of education. This article describes practices and challenges of the implementation of inclusive education at Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia (AJCUI). The goal of this article is to provide viewpoints and recommendations on the implementation of inclusive education in AJCUI. Series of interviews with university's management, lecturers and students with disabilities implemented in order to achieve the stated goal. Significant information collected for this article includes, policy, regulation and facilities provided by the university to optimize learning of students with disabilities, stigma of people with disabilities, as well as challenges encountered by the university in implementing inclusive education. Including in the challenges are (1) University's policy and regulation regarding students with disabilities, (2) Infrastructure in all buildings that support access of students with disabilities, (3) Budget allocation for supporting services of students with disabilities, (4) Capacity building – awareness and skills of lecturer and staff of the university regarding, (5) Establishment of centre for services for students with disabilities.

*Keywords: different abilities, higher education, inclusive education, persons with disabilities, special education*

## Introduction

The issue of disability is a complex and unlimited problem, and can occur worldwide. Disability can occur in poor communities with poor nutrition and inaccessible health facilities, but also in well-off communities with excellent nutrition and accessible health facilities. Disability found in men and women, children and adults, as well as all ethnicities.

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In short, disability can occur to all people regardless of gender, ethnicity and race, age, and socio-economic background. In the Convention on the Right of Person with Disabilities (CRPD), countries in the world agreed that persons with disabilities are persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory limitations. The level of disability can be quite mild or very severe, that in interacting with the environment can encounter obstacles. The disabilities that persons have will influence the fulfillment of their needs. It has also an effect on their effectiveness and full participation to social and economic activities. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) find difficulties to access transportation, communication, and educational facilities, especially in communities that with no concerns in minimizing the environment barriers for the PWDs (Adioetomo, Mont & Irwanto, 2014).

According to Diono (2014), several factors that make the life of PWDs worsen are, lack of community's understanding about disability, lack of community efforts to fulfill the rights of PWDs in various aspect of life, as well as the existence of stigma in the society that disabilities is a curse from God. Therefore, many families cover up or hide their family members who are with disabilities. Prasetyo (2014) stated that level of education and employment are two significant factors related to the welfare of PWDs. Unfortunately many PWDs still live below poverty line and have low level of education (Diono, 2014; Prasetyo, 2014; Adioetomo, Mont & Irwanto, 2014). Many facilities and services provided in the society are not accessible to PWDs. In addition, PWDs have no capacity to express their voice on the neglect of the society in fulfilling the rights of PWDs. As disadvantaged and marginalized group, they become vulnerable to social distress (Prasetyo, 2014).

The Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that in the 2012 National Socioeconomic Survey (*Survey Sosial Ekonomi Nasional* or SUSENAS) number of Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Indonesia is 2.45% of the total population. Of that number, the highest percentage, 39.97%, is people with multiple domains of difficulties. The number followed by difficulties in vision (29.63%), walking (10.26%), hearing (7.87%), remembering or concentration (6.70%), self-care (2.83%), and communication (2.74%). Adioetomo et.al. (2014), referred to data of National basic Health Research (*Riset Kesehatan Dasar or Ristekdas*) in 2007, and indicated that prevalence rate for disability among women (21.5%) is higher in comparison to men (17.4%). Besides, the data indicated that the level of education related to the rates of disability. The low level of education related to high rate of disability.

Article 28H paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia states that every person shall have the right to receive facilitation and special treatment to have the same opportunity and benefit in order to achieve equality and fairness. And in paragraph (3) states that every person shall have the right to social security in order to develop oneself fully as a dignified human being. Other than that, article 5 paragraph (3) of the Indonesian Law on Human Rights No. 39/Year 1999, states that all members of disadvantaged groups in society, such as children, the poor, and the disabled, are entitled to greater protection of human rights. In addition, Indonesia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by endorsing Law No. 19/Year 2011. There are also several legal documents in the form of Laws, Government Regulations, Presidential Decrees, and Ministerial Decrees indicate that the Indonesian Government respect, provide protection and fulfillment of the rights of all level of the population, including the vulnerable group such as persons with disabilities (PWDs). These legislative documents encouraged PWDs to participate in the educational activities. They also become aware that they have the opportunity to access to education, and perceive that education is important for their future to be more independent.

In 2004, the Bandung Declaration “Towards Inclusive Education” declared in order to motivate regular schools to provide education for all children with special needs. A year later in 2005, an international symposium held in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra came up with Bukittinggi recommendation. Among the contents of the recommendation is to support the continuation of the implementation of inclusive education. Inclusive education is one way to ensure that children with special needs obtain good and decent quality of education. As stated by Stainback, Stainback, East and Sapon-Shevin (in Powell, 2012), the intention of inclusive education is not to erase differences. Rather, the intention is to enable all students to belong within an educational community that validated and values their individuality. Therefore, inclusive education intended to increase the welfare and dignity of people with disabilities, and not only targeted for the fulfillment of education for all and compulsory nine years basic education.

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO (in Mihai, 2017) as *“a form of education provided for those who are not achieving, or are not likely to achieve through ordinary educational provisions, the level of educational, social and other attainments appropriate to their age, and which has the aim of furthering their progress towards these levels”* (p. 126). Inclusive education is conceptually based on the belief that all people have the right to be included in age-appropriate activities with their peers throughout life in order to maximize the potential of the children (Powell, 2012; Anati & Ain, 2012), and inclusive education is associated with the achieving of Education for All (Operti, Brady & Duncombe, 2009). According to Waitoller and Artiles (2013), inclusive education is concerned with the access to the general education classroom for students with disabilities. It is also concerned with the issue of social justice of educational institutions’ leadership - including teachers, administrators, and students, as well as the process of teaching and learning - including the pedagogical aspects and content of curriculum that respect the cultural, linguistic, physical, mental, and cognitive complexity of the students (Landorf & Levin, 2007). Unfortunately, some people believe that to place children with disabilities in the same school with the regular students will weaken the overall academic performance (Adioetomo, Mont & Irwanto, 2014).

Referring to the abovementioned definition, inclusive education does not only place person with disabilities into the classroom. Inclusive education does not merely transfer the knowledge and skills. More than that, the rationale of inclusive education is to remove marginalization, to accept the difference and to live together with people who have differences, and to understand that all people regardless the differences have the opportunity to play important role in the society.

### **Inclusive Education in Higher Education**

The participation of young people with disabilities in higher education increased in many countries annually (Hadjikakou & Hartas, 2008; Morgado, Cortes-Vega, Lopez-Gavira, Alvarez & Morina, 2016). This is due to the initiative and policy development on the right of PWDs, the implementation of inclusive education, the development use of ICT, as well as PWDs confidence on the important of studying in higher education for their personal growth. However, representation of young people with disabilities in higher education remain low (Hanafin, Shevlin, Kenny, & Mc Neela, 2007; Hadjikakou & Hartas, 2008).

Farmers, Riddick and Sterling (in Hadjikakou & Hartas, 2008) indicated three levels of consideration that should be take into account regarding participation of PWDs in higher

education. These three levels are personal level, organizational or institutional level and political or ideological level. At personal level, includes providing counseling services, adapting the curriculum (electronic and other materials), modification of teaching and other services (for example, sign language interpreter or materials in Braille). In terms of organizational or institutional level, includes changing standard of procedures, training staff, and modifying the physical environment or the infra structure. At political or ideological level, it is about type of disabilities that students have and policies that support equal opportunity in accessing good quality of education.

According to Bausela, as stated in Morgado, Cortes-Vega, Lopez-Gavira, Alvarez and Morina (2016), *"universities are among the most discriminating institutions, both in terms access for certain students - as is the case of students with disabilities - and in facilitating their continuity in Higher Education so that they do not abandon their educational career prior to earning a degree"* (p.639). This is also true in the case of Indonesian higher education, as written by Irwanto in his article in Jakarta Post Daily "Discrimination against persons with disabilities in higher education in Indonesia" (Jakarta Post Daily March 18, 2014). In this article, Irwanto raised the issue of forty state universities in Indonesia regarding policy of new students' intake for 2014 that considered discriminated the disabilities of the prospective students. The impairment and disabilities of prospective students were included in the eligibility requirements for each study programs at these forty universities. Consequently, the programs offered by the universities excluded students with visual and communication impairments.

Tsaputra (2014) stated that many schools make efforts to implement inclusive education. However, most of this happens only for primary schools and rarely for secondary schools, and become a dream for tertiary education. Very often PWDs are directed to go to vocational education that provide them with basic skills, such as making handicrafts, massaging, painting, etc. In order to improve PWDs' self-confidence, independency, and dignity, the society regarded that such basic skills is sufficient for PWDs' future life. Nevertheless, similar to young people of non-disabilities, young people with disabilities are also entitled to study in a university.

Academic report as well as mass media, have reported various cases of discrimination against PWDs in some universities in Indonesia. For example, in 1993 a case of discrimination occurred with a pharmacy student of a state university. She became a disabled person due to an accident that happened to her while conducting student activities. Her lecturer encouraged her to move to another department, as if she is not eligible to study in the pharmacy department. Finally, she moved to the accounting department. Another example, in 2008 a visually impaired student was denied admission when doing re-registration. The admission office returned the money already paid when he did the re-registration. There was no any explanation why the university refused him to be its student (<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2010/07/30/03380631/pt.akankah.jadi.milik.penyandang.cacat>). The latest hot issue in Indonesian higher education was the video in a social media, showing a group of students bullied a 19 years old autistic student. The autistic student was a sophomore student studying computer and information technology at a private university in West Java. His classmates bullied him verbally and non-verbally almost every day. The perpetrators consider their actions as a joke between friends. Other friends, the bystander, do not come to help him (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/07/17/gunadarma-university-admits-students-bully-autistic-classmate.html>)

Afrianty and Soldatic (2016) reported their study on inclusive education in Islamic education institutions in Indonesia. The Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta Indonesia has been pioneering in facilitating students with disabilities by establishing Center for Disability Services in 2007. The Center focuses on providing services and access support for the PWDs. The initiative started by making infrastructures of all buildings in the university available to be accessible by the PWDs. Then go on with allocating the institutional budget to support students with disabilities. In 2014/2015 academic year, about 45 students with disabilities enrolled at the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University. It becomes the most inclusive education throughout Indonesia.

## **Practices and Challenges of Inclusive Education in Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia (AJCUI)**

In order to have data on practices and challenges of inclusive education in AJCUI, a series of interviews carried out with faculty leaders, lecturers, and students. Some of the interviewees are persons with disabilities.

### **1. Data on students' with disabilities**

Before 2017/2018 academic year, there were no data available regarding numbers of student with disabilities enrolled at AJCUI, as well as data on the type of disabilities they may have. In 2017/2018 academic year, AJCUI has data on number of students with disabilities, and type of disabilities. In total for the 2017 enrollment, there are 21 students with disabilities, and of that number three students have hearing disabilities, one with vision disabilities, and the rest are categorized as "others" disabilities.

Even though before 2017/2018 academic year, there was no data available on students with disabilities at the university level, data was available at faculty/department level. The administration office at the faculty/department levels have data on students with disabilities, since it relates to the services needed by students with disabilities. For example, the administration office at the faculty/department takes notes and organizes the equipment and special room usage schedule when students with disabilities need for the exams. Based on this, the faculty/department has data on the number of students with disabilities at the faculty. However, the data does not purposively intend as baseline information for providing services. It does not use as reference for management plan to allocate budget for providing services to PWDs. It does not use for the bases in developing program for optimizing the learning of PWDs. It does not use as the pointer for staff's capacity building in understanding PWDs, or other related issues needed for inclusive education. Rather, the data is only for administrative scheduling the room usage, nothing else.

### **2. Eligibility for Persons in Disabilities to enroll at AJCUI**

There is no specific policy at university level regarding eligibility of prospective students with disabilities. AJCUI accepts all prospective students if they pass the entrance test - potential academic test and personality test, regardless their disabilities. This informed us that AJCUI provide the equal opportunity to any individuals to study at the university as long as they pass the entrance tests. However, the decision to accept or refuse the new students with disabilities is the leaders of the faculties/department.

Based on the interviews with the management of the faculties, some faculties decided not to accept students with disabilities for the following reasons: (1) not all students are eligible to register at the faculty due to the characteristics of the science (e.g. Medicine, Pharmacy, Mechanical Engineering). (2) The infrastructure at the university is not ready for the students

with disabilities (e.g. screen readers for the visually impaired, computer for the deaf and hard of hearing, etc.). (3) Lecturers do not have skills in providing lectures to students with disabilities. All these three factors influenced the decision of the faculty's management in accepting students with disabilities. However, some faculties had experiences in accommodating students with disabilities to study in the faculties of AJCUI.

For example, at the Faculty of Language and Education there has been an autistic student and visually impaired student. The one that visually impaired, is one of the key informants of this study, she finished her study at the undergraduate program with GPA 3.5. She is now still doing for her Master Program in Applied Linguistic at AJCUI. In case of Faculty of Psychology, there has been student with visual impairment, speech disorders, and student with the wheelchair (no information on the impairment). In other study program, deaf students ever studied at Industrial Engineering and Electrical Engineering. Low vision student was accepted and studied at the Faculty of Biotechnology. One student with Lymphatic Filariasis that caused to permanent disability studied at the Faculty of Law. Referring to the abovementioned experiences it shown that actually AJCUI has applied inclusive education even though it has not explicitly stated. In the interviews, students with disabilities said that when applying or when doing re-registration of their enrollment to AJCUI, there is no question whether she has the disabilities or not. There was also no form to fill in on the disabilities of the students. Therefore, when they have attended lectures, usually about the first week of the beginning of academic year, they will notify the faculty leader. When the faculty knew that situation, the lecturers will adjust themselves with the students as well as the administrative staffs of the faculty (based on communication with the management of the faculty).

From the above explanation, we can conclude that as an institution of higher education there is no specific policy and regulation regarding the eligibility of person with disability to study at AJCUI. The policy and regulation is not at the university level. Instead, it seems that the policy and regulation regarding the person with disability is at the personal level.

### **3. Infrastructure for persons with disabilities**

The person with disabilities regarded buildings at AJCUI is not friendly and accessible. The following are examples of the infrastructure that are not friendly and accessible. The elevators are not sounded. The hallways are not equipped with block guide, the computers at the library are not equipped with screen readers, or the screen readers are out of date that is not fit with the book. The hallways are bumpy that make the wheelchair users uncomfortable. Not all toilets are seat toilets that could not be used by wheelchairs users. The university cafeteria is not accessible for students with disabilities. Therefore, the center for PWD services at the university play important role in providing advocacy to the leaders of the university. Fortunately, in 2017, AJCUI expanded its third campus and it was inaugurated on 25<sup>th</sup> July, as expressed by a leader of one faculty during the interview, the new building has been adapted with PWDs. This information indicated that AJCUI started its concern with person with disabilities. It is expected that it will improved for the future.

### **4. Stigma of person with disabilities**

In an interview with student with disability, she ever heard by herself that the lecturer who taught her said to another lecturer that she had difficulty in teaching students with disabilities. Similarly, some students of non-disabilities show gesture that they do not want to communicate with students with disabilities. This situation indicates that stigma on the person with disabilities is person that is not capable and eligible to study at a higher learning

institution. In fact, in reality many students with disabilities performed better - with GPA higher than 3, while the regular or non-disabilities students only have GPA less than 3. This situation indicates that raising awareness on the person with disabilities is very crucial not only for the staff and lecturers of the AJCUI, but also for the students. Regular formal meeting for staff and lecturers, and orientation time and campus introduction for new students at the beginning of academic year, can be used as event for raising awareness on PWDs.

### **The story of Laeticia (not real name)**

She was 4 months old when doctor detected that she is a person with visual impairment. The reaction of her parents -it is normal- was panic. However, her parents did not send her to school for special needs children. Since in the kindergarten, she studied at school for regular students. She had the experience when she was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade to study in a school for special needs children. According to her to study in a school for special needs children is not challenging, she only socialized with very limited number of students. Thus, her parents sent her back to school for regular students. From kindergarten to senior high school, she studied at the same schools. All the teachers knew her very well. Her parents always reminded her big brother to take care his young disabled sister. She felt very secure, she had her big brother that always taking care of her, and she had friends and classmates that very help full, as well as teachers who are very emphatic and understood to her.

She enrolled at AJCUI when her high school's teacher informed her that AJCUI open the registration for new student, and she was eligible to enroll at AJCUI without a placement test since her high school's grades are excellence. During the registration, there was no question in the form of student application concerning the disabilities of students having or special needs that students may have during their study in AJCUI. She chose Faculty of Psychology to study without knowledge on what psychology is, or what do student learn in psychology.

The first week as student in a university, was the most frightening time. Will students accept me as their friends when they know my disability? What happened when the dean or the lecturers know my disability, do they will understand and help me? Should I discontinue my study at the university? Can I follow all courses provided by the lecturers? These all questions came up in her mind, and made her very nervous to go to the campus. It was then her mother who talked to the management of the Faculty of Psychology, fortunately the dean support her and provide assistance for her to continue her study at the Faculty of Psychology of AJCUI. She finished her undergraduate program and continued her professional master's in Educational Psychology. Currently she is a part-time lecturer in Educational Psychology and Psychology for the Special Needs Children at her alma mater

She felt that she was in the hands of good people, so she could finish her studies at the university. She earned not only a bachelor degree in Psychology, but also masters' degree and professional in Psychology. She thanked her family, thank also to the management, lecturers, administrative staff, and classmates of Faculty of Psychology that always support and lend their hands to assist her. However, there are still lacking that should be improved in the future. First, the infrastructure in all buildings should support the access for the person with disabilities. Second, students and all faculty members' understanding on person with disabilities are important in supporting the learning of students with disabilities. Third, self-confidence and self-efficacy of students with disabilities is crucial for the success of learning in higher education

## Conclusion

Several legislative documents concerning people with disabilities inspired PWDs to participate in education, not only to primary and secondary level, but also to tertiary level of education. This notion is not only good for PWDs to broaden their horizon as well as to equip them with knowledge and skills needed for them in the future. This also gives benefits to the non-disabilities, since they develop their understanding, acceptance and empathy to PWDs. Inclusive education gives benefits to both sides, the disabled as well as the non-disabled.

Self-confidence and self-efficacy in learning in higher education is the core for the success of learning in higher education, and this is not only for regular students. This is also true for students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities need supports from the environment. The management of the university play important role in implementing inclusive education. Budget allocation and infrastructure of all buildings at the university related to the implementation of inclusive education. This depends on the leadership of the university. Lecturers and administrative staffs' awareness on person with disabilities is important in order to reduce stigma. However, skills in delivering knowledge to students with disabilities are also important. Therefore, raising awareness as well as skills in providing services to students with disabilities is important.

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