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Educational Equality for Students with Disabilities in Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT
This study examines educational equity for students with disabilities from a multicultural education perspective. The main issues examined are the persistence of discriminatory practices, deficit-based assessments, and service placements that do not fully support the development of students with disabilities' potential. This research employs a literature review method, drawing primarily from the chapter "Educational Equality for Students with Disabilities" in the book *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, as well as supporting literature on inclusive education, assessment, and multicultural curricula. Data were analyzed through content analysis, involving the stages of critical reading, thematic coding, categorization, and conceptual synthesis. The findings reveal four key strategies: reformulating talent screening and support needs, improving culturally responsive identification and assessment, student-need-based service placement, and the implementation of a sustainable multicultural curriculum. This article emphasizes that educational equality does not mean uniform treatment, but rather the provision of fair, responsive, and dignified support so that students with disabilities can optimally develop their potential.

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PENDAHULUAN

Educational equity for students with disabilities is a critical issue in contemporary education because schools serve not only as spaces for the transfer of knowledge but also as spaces for the fulfillment of rights, the respect for dignity, and the development of every student's potential. In the context of multicultural education, diversity in abilities, social backgrounds, cultures, religions, and languages must be viewed as an educational reality that requires a response through equitable policies and teaching practices.

Previous studies indicate that students with disabilities still frequently face barriers in accessing equitable educational services. These barriers manifest as social discrimination, low confidence in students' potential, assessments that overly emphasize weaknesses, and limited access to inclusive educational services. These conditions can hinder students' participation, character development, and opportunities to develop their talents to the fullest (Apsari & Raharjo, 2021, pp. 159–169; Pratiwi & Wahyudi, 2019, pp. 1–4).

The primary source for this study is the chapter "Educational Equality for Students with Disabilities" by Sara C. Bicard and William L. Heward in the book *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, edited by Banks and McGee Banks. This chapter situates the issue of disability within the frameworks of exceptionality and multicultural education, and emphasizes the importance of effective identification, assessment, services, and instruction for students with disabilities(Bicard & Heward, 2019, pp. 217–239). In the Indonesian context, these ideas are

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relevant to schools' need to build inclusive environments that do not marginalize students with disabilities.

Previous studies on multicultural education and inclusive education have discussed the importance of tolerance, a curriculum that values diversity, and specialized services for children with special needs (Mania, 2010, pp. 78–91; Nurhasanah, 2021, pp. 133–151; Sunanto, 2016, pp. 47–55; Wijaya et al., 2023, pp. 347–357). However, these earlier articles still require strengthening in terms of research focus, scientific argumentation, systematic presentation of findings, and the connection between multicultural education theory and the practice of identifying the potential of students with disabilities.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to analyze strategies for safeguarding the rights to the development of students with disabilities through a multicultural education perspective. Specifically, this article addresses the question: how can schools improve the screening, identification, service placement, and curriculum implementation processes to be more equitable for students with disabilities

METODE

The method used in this study is library research (Mann, 2005, p. 9). The primary source for this study is the book Multicultural Educational Issues and Perspectives by M. Ummah (Ummah, 2019, pp. 243–405). Secondary sources include books, journal articles, educational regulations, and research findings that address inclusive education, students with disabilities, assessment, multicultural education, and the development of students' potential.

Data analysis in this study employs content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 40). The steps in data analysis involve collecting data, reading the available data, then recording and processing the obtained data to subsequently develop it further into a new finding or theory (Zed, 2014, p. 3).

Data collection was conducted in four stages. First, identifying literature relevant to the themes of educational equality, disability, inclusive education, and multicultural curriculum. Second, critically reading the primary source to identify key concepts. Third, noting important ideas from supporting literature. Fourth, grouping data into analytical themes related to talent screening, identification or assessment, service placement, and curriculum.

Data analysis uses content analysis. The stages of analysis include data reduction, coding, theme categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the study is strengthened by comparing findings from primary sources with supporting literature so that the results of the analysis are not only descriptive but also produce a conceptual synthesis that can be applied in the development of inclusive education services.

HASIL TEMUAN

The literature review yielded four main findings. These four findings are not isolated but are interconnected as a framework for improving educational services for students with disabilities.

Table 1. Synthesis of literature review findings

No	Key Findings	Educational Implications
1	Reformulation of talent screening and support needs	Teachers need to view the potential of students with disabilities holistically, not just in terms of academic achievement.
2	Improvements in culturally responsive identification and assessment	Assessments must take into account cultural background, individual circumstances, and the diverse ways in which students demonstrate competence.
3	Placement of services based on student needs	Educational services need to be tailored to support needs, not based on disability labels or

		stereotypes.
4	Sustainable multicultural curriculum	Schools need to build an inclusive culture through curricula, instruction, and assessment that value diversity.

Reformulating Talent Screening and Support Needs

The first finding indicates that talent screening should not be understood as a selection process that excludes students with disabilities from opportunities for self-development. Screening should be interpreted as a process of identifying students' potential, support needs, learning styles, and barriers they face. Thus, screening does not serve to limit access, but rather to determine appropriate learning strategies and services.

A deficit-based approach needs to be replaced with a strength-based approach. In a deficit-based approach, students with disabilities are more often viewed through the lens of their limitations, so their talents or potential receive less attention. Conversely, a strength-based approach encourages teachers to assess students' abilities more broadly, including creativity, communication, perseverance, social skills, and special interests that can be developed through pedagogical support.

Improvements In Culturally Responsive Identification And Assessment

The second finding underscores the importance of improving the identification and assessment system. Assessments that rely solely on academic tests or cognitive achievements have the potential to result in unfair decisions, particularly for students with special needs or those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, assessments need to be made more comprehensive through observation, portfolios, interviews, progress records, as well as the involvement of parents and experts.

Culturally responsive assessment means that the evaluation process takes into account language, learning habits, family context, and the ways in which students express their abilities. This principle is important because students' abilities are not always evident through a single test format. Teachers need to use a variety of instruments so that educational decisions more accurately reflect students' circumstances and potential (Arikunto, 2013, p. 15; Kurniawan et al., 2022, pp. 56–58).

Student-Needs-Based Service Placement

The third finding indicates that service or classroom placement should be based on support needs, not merely on a disability label. Equitable placement does not always mean treating all students the same within a single service model, but rather ensuring that each student receives appropriate support so they can participate meaningfully in the learning process.

In inclusive school practices, service placement must consider academic, social, emotional, communication, mobility, and accessibility needs. Services may include instructional modifications, support, assistive devices, assessment accommodations, or collaboration among classroom teachers, support teachers, counselors, and parents. The core principle is to avoid unnecessary segregation and ensure that students with disabilities continue to have dignified opportunities for social and academic interaction.

Implementation of a Sustainable Multicultural Curriculum

The fourth finding confirms that a sustainable multicultural curriculum serves as a crucial foundation for building inclusive schools. A curriculum is not merely a list of topics but also encompasses guiding values, teaching methods, classroom experiences, and assessment systems. A curriculum that is responsive to diversity can help prevent discrimination and foster mutual respect among students.

The implementation of a multicultural curriculum must be carried out systematically through the development of inclusive teaching materials, the use of examples relevant to student diversity, teacher training, and periodic evaluations of teaching practices. Sustainability is key because changes in attitudes and school culture cannot be achieved through short-term programs. Schools need to ensure that the value of inclusion is reflected in policies, learning, social interactions, and educational decision-making (Mania, 2010, pp. 78–91; Sarnita & Andaryani, 2023, pp. 1183–1193).

DISKUSI

The four findings above indicate that educational equity for students with disabilities must be understood as substantive justice. Substantive justice does not always mean treating all students the same, but rather providing support tailored to each student's needs. Within this framework, schools must avoid the assumption that students with disabilities lack the ability to excel or develop their talents.

Multicultural education offers an important foundation for understanding disability as part of student diversity. If culture, language, religion, gender, and social class are recognized as elements of diversity, then disability must also be understood as part of the educational reality that demands a pedagogical response. This aligns with the view that inclusive schools must transform school culture, not merely provide technical services for specific students.

In the context of learning, teachers play a strategic role as facilitators. Teachers need to develop a perspective that values students' strengths, use a variety of assessment methods, and collaborate with others to design appropriate services. School principals also play a role in providing policies, facilities, and a school climate that enable inclusive practices to be implemented consistently.

Compared to the original article, this revision clarifies the structure of the study by separating findings from discussion. This separation is important so that readers can distinguish the results of the literature synthesis from conceptual interpretations. Additionally, the revision emphasizes that the issue of educational equity for students with disabilities cannot be adequately addressed through normative statements alone but must be translated into concrete mechanisms for screening, assessment, service placement, and curriculum.

The practical implication of this study is the need for schools to develop participatory procedures for identifying students with disabilities. Teachers, counselors, parents, and specialists need to be involved in the data collection process and the formulation of services. Thus, educational decisions should not rely solely on academic scores but should also take into account students' support needs and developmental potential in a holistic manner.

KESIMPULAN

This study concludes that educational equity for students with disabilities can be strengthened through four key strategies: reformulating the screening of abilities and support needs; improving culturally responsive identification and assessment; providing services based on student needs; and implementing a sustainable multicultural curriculum. These four strategies form a conceptual framework to help schools develop services that are more equitable, inclusive, and respectful of the potential of students with disabilities.

The contribution of this article lies in the assertion that educational equity is not merely a matter of school access, but also concerns how schools identify, assess, place, and support students in the learning process. A limitation of this study is its reliance on a literature review approach, which means it does not present empirical field data. Future research is encouraged to test this framework through case studies in inclusive schools or madrasahs to identify the most effective practices, barriers, and implementation models.

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