Educational Inclusion Transformation: Innovative *'Inclusionplus'* Model to Enhance Access and Support for Children with Special Needs

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to develop an inclusive education model "InklusiPlus" in Kendari City for children with special needs. The research's goal is to enhance access and support to create an inclusive educational environment. Through a collaborative approach, the study focuses on establishing a Collaborative Forum, professional training, developing inclusive facilities, and raising community awareness campaigns. The research involves 36 participants, including children with special needs, educators, and parents at Special Schools in Kendari City. Data collection is conducted through observations and interviews. Qualitative analysis is employed for data analysis. The results indicate that "InklusiPlus" successfully enhances collaboration among stakeholders, provides relevant training, and creates inclusive facilities. The research's conclusion highlights the success of the "InklusiPlus" model in creating an inclusive environment that supports the development of children with special needs in Kendari City.

Keywords: Collaborative Approach, Inclusive Education Model, Special Needs

ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan model inklusi pendidikan, "InklusiPlus," di Kota Kendari untuk anak-anak berkebutuhan khusus. Rasio penelitian ini adalah meningkatkan akses dan dukungan untuk menciptakan lingkungan pendidikan yang inklusif. Melalui pendekatan kolaboratif, penelitian ini memfokuskan pembentukan Forum Kolaboratif, pelatihan profesional, pengembangan fasilitas inklusif, dan kampanye kesadaran masyarakat. Objek penelitian melibatkan 36 partisipan, termasuk anak-anak berkebutuhan khusus, pendidik, dan orang tua di Sekolah Luar Biasa Kota Kendari. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi dan wawancara. Analisis data menggunakan pendekatan dalam penelitian pengembangan menjadi semi pengembangan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa "InklusiPlus" berhasil meningkatkan kolaborasi di antara pemangku kepentingan, menyediakan pelatihan yang relevan, dan menciptakan fasilitas inklusif. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menggarisbawahi keberhasilan model "InklusiPlus" dalam menciptakan lingkungan inklusif yang mendukung perkembangan anak berkebutuhan khusus di Kota Kendari.

***Kata Kunci:** anak berkebutuhan khusus, model pendidikan inklusif, pendekatan kolaboratif.*

INTRODUCTION

Special Needs Education (SNE) has become a global focus, in line with the recognition by the World Health Organization (WHO) stating that approximately 15% of the world's population has special needs (Organization, 2021). In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture reports that around 5% of children have special needs, but only 30% of them can access appropriate educational services (Culture, 2020). Inclusive education emerges as an approach oriented towards the rights of all children (Paseka & Schwab, 2020; Wray et al., 2022), including those with special needs, with the goal of providing equal learning opportunities according to their respective potentials and abilities (Setiawan & Apsari, 2019).

Despite inclusive education being the primary foundation, its implementation still faces various challenges, especially in less supportive areas (Addy et al., 2023). In the context of Kendari City, this research proposes a collaborative approach as a solution to enhance the inclusion of Special Needs Education. The collaborative approach is considered to have the potential to improve the participation and access of children with special needs to education (Natadireja et al., 2023). Nilholm (2021) emphasizes that collaboration can not only enhance the learning experience of children with special needs but also improve their social and emotional skills, while strengthening the involvement of parents and the community in the education sector (Suprayitno & Wahyudi, 2020).

This research also details that a collaborative approach can have a positive impact on parental involvement in supporting special needs education. As highlighted by Lehrl et al., parental collaboration can bring significant improvements in supporting special needs education and can enhance the learning outcomes of children (Lehrl et al., 2020). Thus, this research will delve into the potential of the collaborative approach in enhancing the inclusion of special needs education in Kendari City

Challenges and Barriers in the Implementation of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Kendari City: Comprehensive Analysis at the Local Level

Several issues related to the inclusion of special needs education in Kendari City include: 1) Lack of community understanding of the importance of inclusive education. Some people still believe that children with special needs should be placed in special schools or facilities; 2) Limited resources and facilities in schools hindering the implementation of inclusive education. Some schools lack adequate facilities such as accessibility, specialized equipment, and suitable classrooms to support children with special needs; 3) Lack of training and education for teachers and educators. Teachers and educators need adequate skills and knowledge to address the needs of children with special needs; 4) Lack of support from parents and the community. Parents and the community need to be involved in supporting inclusive education and providing support to children with special needs; 5) Lack of coordination and collaboration between institutions and relevant stakeholders.

Good coordination is needed between educational institutions, government, NGOs, and the community to optimize the implementation of inclusive education.

Therefore, collaborative efforts and better coordination among all relevant stakeholders are needed to enhance the inclusion of special needs education in Kendari City. Additionally, there is a need to increase community understanding of inclusive education and provide adequate resources and facilities in schools, as well as training and education for teachers and educators.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with the primary goal of developing an inclusive education model in Kendari City. This approach was chosen to deeply immerse into the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders (Rayanto, 2020). The research methodology (Figure 1) involves the use of data collection techniques as well as the selection of informants and research subjects. Data collection techniques include observation and interviews. Observations are conducted in several Special Schools in Kendari City to record interactions between children with special needs, educators, and parents. In-depth interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and education specialists, to gain comprehensive insights. Data analysis adopts a thematic analysis method, where findings from observations and interviews are categorized into main themes to reveal patterns, similarities, and differences. Data triangulation is carried out to ensure the consistency and validity of findings by comparing observation and interview results.
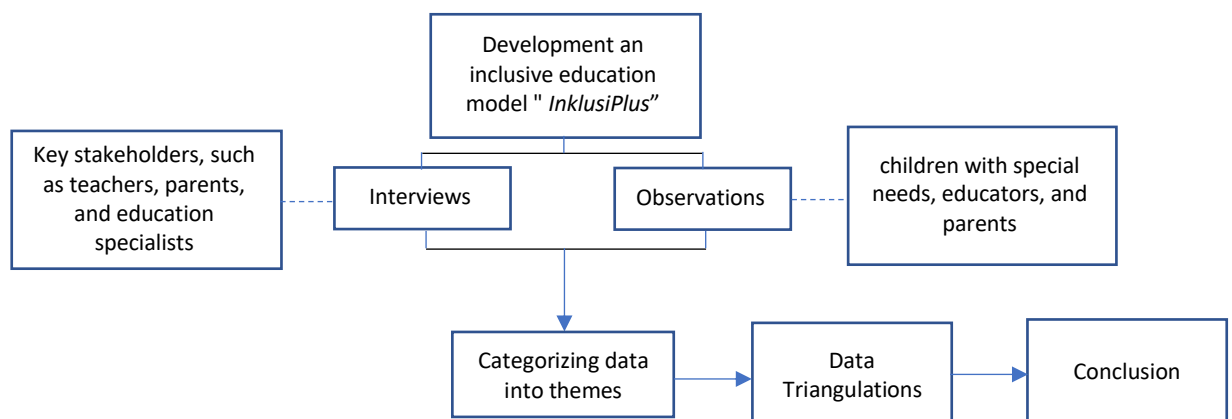

Figure 1. The flow of research activities

In terms of research ethics, the safety and confidentiality of informant identities will be maintained. Consent will be obtained from each informant before their involvement in this research. The rights of informants and research subjects, including the right to refuse or terminate participation, will be respected. These ethical principles serve as guidelines to ensure research integrity and respect the privacy and security rights of informants and research subjects.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In order to delve deeper into the interactions among children with special needs, this research specifically focuses observations on 14 children, comprising 4 boys and 10 girls. This approach is designed to provide in-depth insights into the social dynamics that may emerge among them.

During this observation process, the researcher focused attention on various situations, ranging from classroom activities to casual moments outside of class hours. The primary goal was to create a holistic picture of interpersonal interactions among these children with special needs. Preliminary results indicate diversity in how boys and girls with special needs interact. Nevertheless, there are interesting patterns in the form of social support given to each other. Boys tend to show proactive responses to the needs of their classmates, while girls stand out in providing emotional support.

The importance of the educator's role in guiding interactions among children with special needs is also highlighted in this research. With a deep understanding of these dynamics, it is hoped that this research can contribute positively to the development of a more inclusive and supportive educational approach for children with special needs in the school environment.

The processing of observation results conducted on ten children with special needs at the Special School (SLB) in Kendari City provides a comprehensive overview of the various types of needs they face. The classification results from the observation sheets show significant variation, including categories such as intellectual disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, autism, speech impairments, and visual impairments (Figure 2).
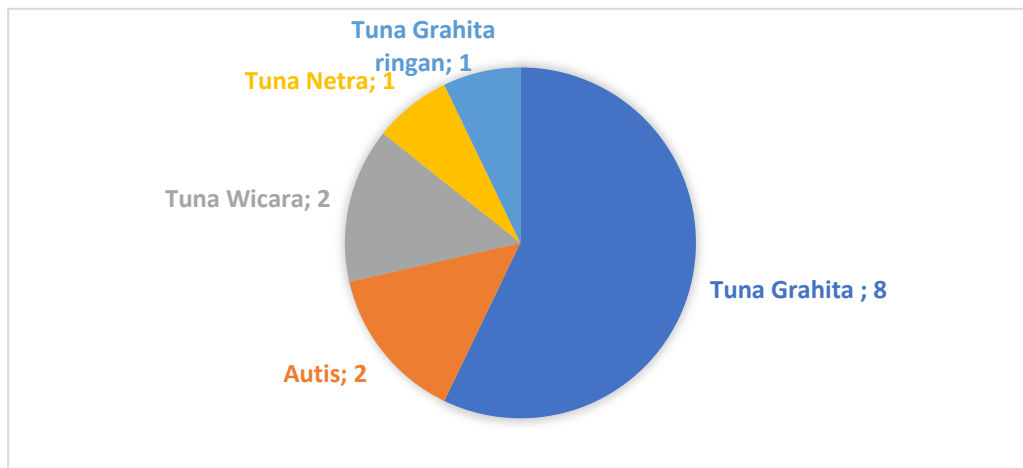
Figure 2. Classification of Types of Special Needs in Observed Children

Figure 2 not only provides an overview of the diverse special needs of children in the Special School (SLB) in Kendari City but also highlights the uniqueness and potential of each individual. The observation results open a window into their world, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive approach in education. Through a deeper understanding of the needs and characteristics of

each child, more adaptive and supportive educational solutions may emerge for those with special needs.

In detailing these findings, it was found that some of the children fall into the category of visual impairment (tuna grahita). This condition indicates a level of difficulty in understanding visual information. However, some of them are classified as having mild visual impairment, indicating their ability to handle visual information with a lower level of difficulty.

Furthermore, the research focus also involves children on the autism spectrum. In-depth observation of their interactions in the school environment provides insights into how they communicate and adapt. These findings can be a crucial foundation for the development of more effective educational approaches for children with autism in the SLB environment.

Speech impairment is another category identified in the observation results. Children with special needs in this category face challenges in oral expression and understanding spoken language. The importance of detecting and responding to their communication needs is a significant highlight in the context of this research. Additionally, the findings include children with special needs in the category of visual impairment (tuna netra). This condition indicates that they face obstacles in vision or may even be completely blind. Observations of how they interact with their surroundings can provide valuable insights for designing a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Preferensi of Children with Special Needs: Between Personal Space and Social Environment

This research explores the preferences of children with special needs and reveals an interesting phenomenon, where many students tend to prefer being at home and engaging in activities using gadgets rather than participating in social environments. The researcher's findings provide valuable insights into how the surrounding environment can influence the daily lives of children with special needs.

Engagement with Gadgets: Personal Space Choice. One prominent finding in this research is the preference of children with special needs to engage in activities using gadgets. This reflects a shift in how they create personal space and experience comfort. Gadgets such as tablets or smartphones can provide access to a controlled and customizable world, which often can be a safe and comfortable place for these children. It is important to understand that this preference may be related to the challenges faced by children with special needs in direct interactions. The digital environment provides a more structured form of communication, giving children control over situations and reducing the discomfort that may be felt in direct social interactions.

Challenges in Social Environments: Why Aren't Children Interested? The research results also reveal that most children with special needs are less interested in being in social environments. This can be understood as a result of various challenges they may experience in terms of communication, social perception, or anxiety related to social interactions. It is important for us not to

perceive a lack of interest in social environments as an indicator of the inability or unhappiness of the child. Instead, a deep understanding of individual needs and preferences can help us design environments that support their development.

Finding Balance: Supporting Positive Social Interaction. Despite the preference for playing with gadgets at home, it does not mean that social interaction is not important. Instead, our task as educators and parents is to create a healthy balance between activities at home and participation in social environments. Practical steps that can be taken involve:

1. Structured Approach: Introducing social activities with a structured approach can help children with special needs feel more comfortable. Specially designed social programs, such as small groups or interest-based activities, can be a good way to start.
2. Building Social Skills: Involving children in activities that support the development of their social skills, such as role-playing or cooperative games, can help them feel more confident in social interactions.
3. Accommodating Individual Needs: The individual needs of each child are different. Some children may prefer one-on-one interactions, while others may be more comfortable in small groups. Listening to their needs and providing appropriate support is crucial.

Challenges in Teaching Children with Autism: Teacher's Perspective

Educating children on the autism spectrum poses its own set of challenges, both for the students themselves and for dedicated educators committed to providing inclusive educational services. The results of interviews with teachers reveal several obstacles and challenges faced in the process of teaching children with autism.

Table 1. Challenges and Obstacles Faced by Teachers

No	Challenges and Obstacles	Interpretation of Interview
1	Individuality in Autism Learning	The statement that the autism learning process is highly individual reflects the complexity of this condition. Each child with autism has unique needs and characteristics. This demands an individualized approach in designing learning strategies, creating extra challenges for educators. Teachers need to understand the tendencies, interests, and strengths of each autistic child to create a suitable learning environment. This requires ongoing training and support so that teachers can develop effective methods and facilitate optimal learning.
2	Challenges in Communication and Emotional Control	The main challenges faced by teachers include difficulties in communicating with autistic children and managing their emotions. Some autistic children may struggle to express their needs or engage in social interactions. This can make it

		challenging for teachers to understand the best approach to engage with these children and facilitate effective communication. Limited emotional control can also pose challenges in the learning process. Some autistic children may experience rapid emotional changes that are difficult to manage, requiring a specific approach to classroom management and handling situations that may cause discomfort.
3	Difficulty in Explaining Material and Slow Thought Processes	Challenges faced by teachers in explaining material and understanding the slow thought processes of autistic children create a need for highly structured and adaptive teaching methods. Careful planning and visually presenting the material may be key to overcoming these difficulties. Additional training for teachers, especially focusing on teaching strategies suitable for children with autism, can enhance the effectiveness of learning. Support from special education specialists and psychologists can also provide guidance and solutions for teachers facing challenges in the learning process.
4	The limitations in facilities and infrastructure for Children with Special Needs	Another challenge that arises is the limitation of facilities and infrastructure needed to handle children with special needs (ABK), including autistic children. Autism-friendly classrooms require adequate facilities and resources to support inclusive learning. Investment is needed in providing facilities such as special rooms, customized teaching materials, and technological support to enhance the learning environment for autistic children. Additionally, training and enhancing the competence of teachers in utilizing these facilities and infrastructure are also crucial.
5	Challenges from Parents	Disagreement or a sense of despair from some parents can be an additional barrier in providing consistent and effective support for autistic children. Parental support and involvement are crucial in fostering the child's development. Therefore, a collaborative approach and open communication between teachers and parents can help address uncertainty and disagreement.

Understanding the Challenges of Parents in Raising Children with Special Needs

Confronting the reality of having a child with special needs is a unique and challenging journey for every parent. The interview results conducted by

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researchers with parents of special needs students reveal a range of issues that may not only impact their daily lives but also provide an overview of the common misconceptions parents often have regarding the special needs of their children.

1. Difficulty in Understanding the Special Needs of Children

One of the main findings of this research is the widespread lack of understanding among parents regarding the special needs of their children. Many parents acknowledge that they have a limited understanding of the specific conditions faced by their children. This can lead to frustration and confusion, as a lack of understanding of special needs may hinder parents' efforts to provide appropriate support. In this regard, the researchers suggest efforts for education and awareness among parents about the specific needs of their children. Workshops, seminars, or online resources can be effective methods to enhance parents' understanding of the special needs of their children. This way, it is hoped that parents can be more prepared and capable of navigating the journey of raising a child with these unique challenges.

2. Difficulty in Finding Support

Parents also reported difficulty in finding adequate support to address the challenges they face. Some feel isolated and unsure where to seek help. Therefore, it is crucial to create a strong community network among parents of children with special needs. Governments and social institutions can play an active role in providing resources and supporting the formation of parent communities. Local support groups, online forums, and regular meetings can serve as platforms for parents to share experiences, strategies, and emotional support. This can not only help overcome isolation but also facilitate the exchange of valuable knowledge.

3. Optimizing Child Development

The interview results also indicate that many parents struggle to identify concrete steps to optimize the development of their children. Special needs often require a more individualized and focused approach, and not all parents feel confident in designing suitable developmental strategies. Special education for parents can be an effective solution. These programs can include practical guidance, advice from experts, and direct demonstrations on the best ways to support the development of children with special needs. Additionally, involving parents in the child's educational planning process can help create better collaboration among parents, teachers, and other educators.

4. Promoting Community Awareness

In addition to providing direct support to parents, this research also highlights the importance of raising community awareness about special needs. The abundance of misunderstanding and stigma still associated with these conditions can be a barrier to the social integration of children with special needs. Education on inclusion can play a key role in changing societal perceptions. Public campaigns, inclusive school programs, and collaboration with mass media can help

promote a better understanding of special needs and build a more inclusive and diversity-friendly community.

Discussion

Transforming Education in Kendari City through a Collaborative Approach

A collaborative approach is a crucial key to enhancing educational inclusion for children with special needs in Kendari City. In this context, educational inclusion refers to efforts to align the education system to accommodate the diversity of children, regardless of their specific conditions. There are relevant theories and research supporting the need to adopt a collaborative approach to achieve more effective and sustainable educational inclusion. One theory that can support the understanding of educational inclusion is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the influence of the environment on a child's development. In the context of educational inclusion, this approach views the child as an individual engaged in various systems, such as family, school, and community (Xu & Filler, 2008). By adopting a collaborative approach, we can ensure that all these systems work together to create an environment that supports children with special needs.

Research by Paju et al. also highlights the importance of collaboration among stakeholders involved in inclusive education. They emphasize that collaboration among teachers, parents, and special education specialists can result in a more holistic approach to supporting children with special needs (Paju et al., 2022). This collaboration involves not only the exchange of information but also a shared understanding of the individual needs of the child and the planning of appropriate supportive strategies.

In the context of Kendari City, where this research is conducted, a collaborative approach can be implemented through various concrete steps. Firstly, there should be regular discussion forums between educators, parents, and special education specialists to share experiences and knowledge. These forums can create a space to discuss the challenges faced by children with special needs and find collective solutions. The collaborative approach can also be reinforced through training and professional development for teachers. Social constructivist theory highlights the importance of developing teachers' knowledge and skills in creating an inclusive learning environment (Leifler, 2020). This training can include differential teaching strategies, inclusive classroom management, and a deep understanding of the needs of children with special needs.

Looking at facilities and resources, the theory of educational justice becomes relevant. Educational justice considers the fair distribution of educational resources, ensuring that every child has equal access to quality education (Cook-Harvey et al., 2016). In this case, collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the community is crucial to ensure the provision of facilities that support inclusion, such as autism-friendly classrooms and other supporting facilities. Eccleston's research also highlights the importance of collaboration between teachers and special education specialists. They

emphasize that teachers need specialist support to design and implement learning approaches suitable for the needs of children with special needs (Eccleston, 2010).

In the context of Kendari City, such collaboration can be enhanced through joint training sessions and the development of inclusive curricula. Collaborative approaches involving education, community support, and efforts to raise community awareness can also be viewed from the perspective of critical education theory. This theory emphasizes the need to involve the community in transforming the education system to achieve social justice. By involving all parties, including the Kendari City community, we can create an inclusive culture that encourages collective support for children with special needs. In interviews with parents of children with special needs, a collaborative approach becomes increasingly crucial. Family system theory highlights that families play a central role in child development. Through open dialogue and close collaboration between schools and parents, we can better understand the individual needs of children and design holistic support strategies (Yu et al., 2021a). The collaborative approach to enhancing educational inclusion for children with special needs in Kendari City becomes increasingly relevant given the complexity of challenges faced by families and schools. In elaborating on this approach, it is essential to understand that each family has its unique experiences in caring for a child with special needs. Therefore, the collaborative approach involves not only the education sector but also the active roles of parents, the community, and supporting institutions within it.

In the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, we understand that children with special needs exist in interconnected environments. From the family to school and the community, interactions between these various systems can have a significant impact on the child's development. The collaborative approach in this context can be interpreted as a joint effort to create positive synergy throughout the educational ecosystem. By involving all stakeholders, we can design more holistic strategies tailored to the needs of children (Yu et al., 2021b).

Research by Rodrigues et al. emphasizes the importance of collaboration among parties involved in inclusive education. They discuss that collaboration between teachers, parents, and special education specialists can create a more holistic approach to supporting children with special needs. This concept of collaboration not only involves the exchange of information but also a shared understanding of the individual needs of children and the planning of appropriate support strategies (Rodrigues et al., 2015; Nurfadhillah, 2021).

In summary, a collaborative approach to enhancing educational inclusion for children with special needs in Kendari City requires the integration of relevant theories and research. From Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory to social constructivist theory, each concept provides valuable insights. Collaboration among educators, parents, and specialists is key to creating an inclusive, fair, and sustainable educational environment (Rad et al., 2022). By integrating these theories into practical implementation, we can achieve positive changes in the education system of Kendari City and realize a vision of better educational inclusion.

InclusionPlus Model: Harmonious Collaboration for Justice-oriented Education in Kendari City

This model reflects a harmonious collaboration among all stakeholders to achieve better and justice-oriented inclusive education in Kendari City. Based on the findings and collaborative concepts to enhance inclusive education for children with special needs in Kendari City, here are the recommended design model:
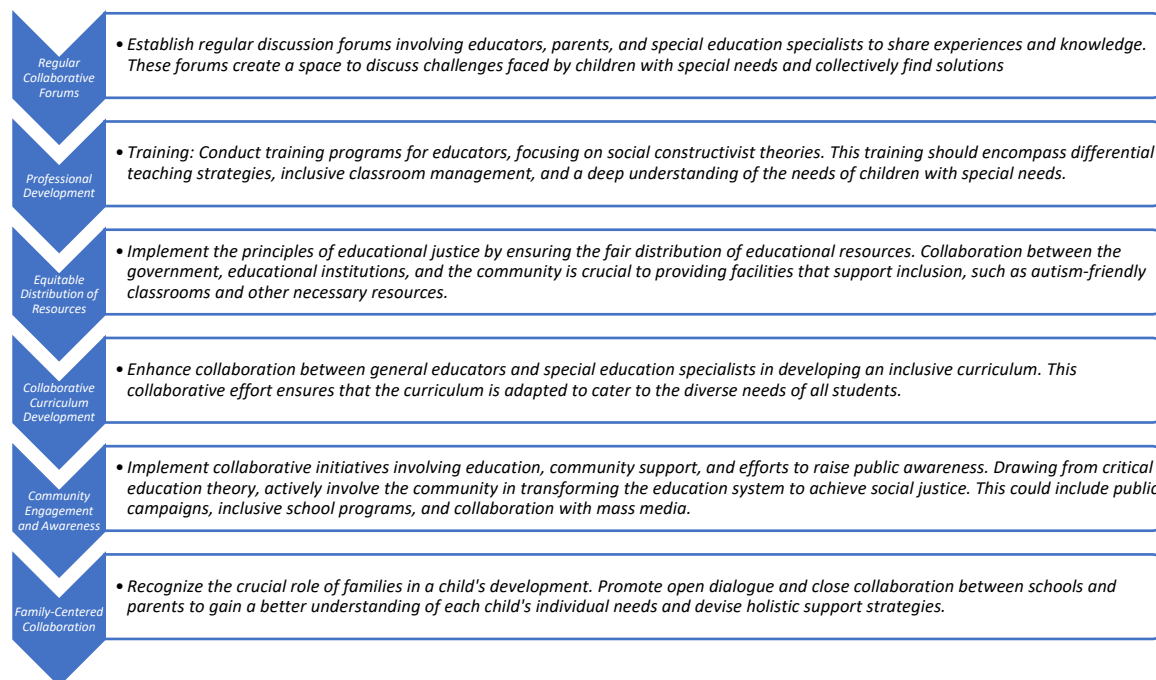

Stage	Description
Regular Collaborative Forums	• Establish regular discussion forums involving educators, parents, and special education specialists to share experiences and knowledge. These forums create a space to discuss challenges faced by children with special needs and collectively find solutions
Professional Development	• Training: Conduct training programs for educators, focusing on social constructivist theories. This training should encompass differential teaching strategies, inclusive classroom management, and a deep understanding of the needs of children with special needs.
Equitable Distribution of Resources	• Implement the principles of educational justice by ensuring the fair distribution of educational resources. Collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the community is crucial to providing facilities that support inclusion, such as autism-friendly classrooms and other necessary resources.
Collaborative Curriculum Development	• Enhance collaboration between general educators and special education specialists in developing an inclusive curriculum. This collaborative effort ensures that the curriculum is adapted to cater to the diverse needs of all students.
Community Engagement and Awareness	• Implement collaborative initiatives involving education, community support, and efforts to raise public awareness. Drawing from critical education theory, actively involve the community in transforming the education system to achieve social justice. This could include public campaigns, inclusive school programs, and collaboration with mass media.
Family-Centered Collaboration	• Recognize the crucial role of families in a child's development. Promote open dialogue and close collaboration between schools and parents to gain a better understanding of each child's individual needs and devise holistic support strategies.

Figure 3. InclusionPlus Model (Research Team Design)

The establishment of a Collaborative Forum serves as the cornerstone to support educational inclusion in Kendari City. This forum provides a space for educators, parents, and special education specialists to communicate regularly, exchange experiences, and jointly design strategies. In the next steps, professional development and training become key to the success of this model. Teachers will be empowered through continuous training, encompassing inclusive teaching strategies, responsive classroom management, and a profound understanding of the needs of children with special needs.

The development of inclusive facilities also takes priority. By collaborating with the government and relevant institutions (Meirawan et al., 2022), we can ensure the existence of autism-friendly classrooms and other resources that support the diversity of students. Collaboration with specialists is the next strategic step. Involving psychologists, therapists, and special education specialists, we can design a holistic approach that meets the individual needs of each child. Public education and awareness form the foundation for creating collective support. This campaign will enhance the community's understanding of

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the importance of educational inclusion, creating an environment that supports all students.

Support systems for parents (Machmud & Ramadhan, 2022) will provide psychosocial and educational support. These programs help parents understand and overcome challenges they may face, enabling them to actively participate in their children's education. Regular evaluation and monitoring will be tools to measure the effectiveness of the model. With routine monitoring, we can identify areas that need improvement and ensure that educational inclusion progresses as expected. By integrating all these steps, the "InclusionPlus" model not only creates an inclusive environment in schools but also brings positive change to the entire community of Kendari City.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the urgency of a collaborative approach to enhance educational inclusion for children with special needs in Kendari City. By establishing a Collaborative Forum, providing professional training, and developing inclusive facilities, the "InclusionPlus" model promotes synergy among educators, parents, and specialists. Collaboration with the government and public awareness campaigns ensures comprehensive support for children with special needs. Support systems for parents and periodic evaluations affirm the commitment to a holistic approach. This model aims to create a fair, inclusive, and sustainable educational environment, ensuring that every child has equal access and the necessary support. Thus, these recommendations form the foundation for a positive transformation in the education system of Kendari City towards improved inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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