



## CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF SLOW LEARNERS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

### KARAKTERISTIK DAN KEBUTUHAN SISWA SLOW LEARNER DALAM PROSES PEMBELAJARAN

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#### Abstract

Inclusive education is a public school that facilitates students with disabilities, also known as children with special needs, where students have physical limitations, one example of which is slow learners. A slow learner is a learning disability where students face obstacles and difficulties in thinking. Slow learners can still follow the school curriculum, but they require slightly different treatment from regular students and additional time in the learning process. Before instruction begins, teachers must understand the characteristics and needs of children with special needs, particularly slow learners.

**Keywords :** Inclusive education, learning process, slow learner.

#### Abstrak

Pendidikan inklusif merupakan sekolah umum yang memfasilitasi siswa difabel atau dikenal juga dengan anak berkebutuhan khusus dimana siswa memiliki keterbatasan pada kondisi tubuh, salah satu contohnya yaitu slow learner. Slow learner merupakan gangguan dalam belajar dimana siswa memiliki hambatan dan kesulitan dalam berpikir. Slow learner masih memungkinkan untuk mereka mengikuti kurikulum di sekolah, namun membutuhkan perlakuan yang sedikit berbeda dari siswa regular serta tambahan waktu yang sedikit lama dalam proses belajar. Sebelum pembelajaran dilaksanakan, guru harus mengetahui karakteristik dan kebutuhan dari anak berkebutuhan khusus terutama anak slow learner.

**Kata Kunci :** Pendidikan inklusi, proses pembelajaran, anak lamban belajar



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a public school that facilitates students with disabilities, also known as children with special needs (ABK) or students with physical limitations. In inclusive schools, students will undergo the same learning process as regular students through adjustments tailored to the needs of students with special needs based on their characteristics, according to Verbeke (2002). Inclusive education is an educational system that accommodates both typical and students with disabilities in the same learning environment. Having students with special needs in regular classrooms is crucial for achieving learning objectives that foster social skills and enhance their abilities (Arifudin, 2021).

Inclusive education is an approach that is fundamentally based on the principle that every individual, including those with disabilities or special needs, has the same right to quality education, Akhiruddin (2015). According to Efendi (2006), children with special needs are different from normal children in general. Children with special needs are children who require special services and education to develop their potential. There are many types of children with special needs, one of which is slow learners. Slow learners are children who have learning difficulties.

Slow learners are children whose intellectual potential is below that of normal children in general, but they are not considered mentally disabled. Slow learners have low academic performance or scores slightly below average compared to typical children, either in one or all academic areas. When administered an IQ test (Intelligence Quotient), their IQ scores range between 70 and 90, but they are not classified as having mental retardation (Nurfadhillah et al., 2021). Slow learners are like other students; they have aspirations and untapped potential, hoping to pursue education, support, and understanding of knowledge (Afzal, Khan, and Ali, 2021; Naeem, Ali, and Ahmed, 2022).

According to Desiningrum (2016:133), one of the characteristics of slow learners is that they tend to be slow in understanding learning materials. Sometimes they do not immediately grasp learning materials that are delivered quickly, so teachers must repeat the explanation of the material. However, slow learners generally do not have difficulty socializing with others or interacting with learning groups (Kaznowski, 2004; Watson & Rangel, 1989). In inclusive education schools, collaboration and cooperation are required between teachers, school staff, and specialists such as psychologists, child needs therapists, and counselors (Taufan & Mazhud, 2014).

In inclusive schools, teachers, especially assistant teachers and subject teachers, must be able to recognize the characteristics of students with learning disabilities, ranging from physical, emotional, social, and intellectual characteristics. Understanding these characteristics aims to help slow learners study effectively, because effective learning requires teaching methods that must be mastered by teachers who explain the learning process, Delphie (2012). This study aims to identify the characteristics and needs of slow learners in the learning process at SMP Negeri 22 Surakarta.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research method uses a descriptive-qualitative approach. This method is used to describe and understand a phenomenon that occurs directly in the field in depth, particularly the characteristics and needs of slow learners in the learning process. Data collection uses observation and interview techniques with subjects who act as informants, namely teachers and



students. Observations were conducted by directly observing the characteristics of slow learners in the learning process with teachers at SMPN 22 SURAKARTA inclusive school. Interviews were conducted with accompanying teachers and students to deepen knowledge about the characteristics and needs of slow learners.

Sampling was conducted by selecting one slow learner at SMPN 22 SURAKARTA inclusive school, or what is known as purposive sampling. The aspects studied in this research include: the independence of slow learners, their emotional attitudes, their academic and non-academic abilities, their learning styles, and the learning support they receive to achieve optimal learning development. In this research, data was processed using triangulation, where data was collected, then reduced or categorized, and finally presented, with the final step being the drawing of conclusions.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Slow learners are students who have learning disabilities that cause them to have obstacles and difficulties in thinking. Slow learners are children whose abilities do not match those of their peers, particularly in academic areas (Cooter & Cooter Jr., and Wiley). Slow learners are still able to follow the curriculum in school, but during the learning process, they require adjustments to certain educational programs. However, they need different treatment from regular students and may require a bit more time. During the learning process, slow learners may encounter various challenges. Therefore, teachers must understand the characteristics of slow learners and recognize their specific needs in the learning process.

#### Characteristics of Slow Learners

According to Steven R. Shaw (2010: 15), the characteristics of slow learners are: a) low intelligence and academic achievement; b) students can demonstrate superior performance when learning is presented in concrete rather than abstract concepts; c) Students experience cognitive difficulties in understanding new learning material and integrating new learning material with previous learning material; d). In learning and completing tasks, students require additional time and extra practice to develop academic skills commensurate with their peers. Every slow learner student, of course, has different characteristics, but generally, slow learners have distinct characteristics. The following are some common characteristics found in slow learner students:

##### 1. Difficulty understanding abstract concepts

Slow learners often have difficulty understanding learning materials with abstract concepts and find it easier to understand concrete concepts. Based on the interview results, it was explained that for certain subjects, especially for slow learners or students with special needs with severe disabilities, teachers will only explain the general theory or adjust the material to the students' abilities. In addition to presenting concrete material, teachers also have their own methods for delivering learning material. The methods used are typically in the form of lectures or direct presentations using language adapted to the students to make it easier for them to understand the material being taught.

##### 2. Slow academic progress



Due to their thinking barriers, slow learners need a long time to develop academically. However, with a teaching style that is adapted to the students' abilities, it will be easier for them to understand the lessons. Teachers can also explore and develop students' interests and talents, so if students are slow in their academic development, they can develop through non-academic fields according to their abilities.

### 3. Need for repetition and reinforcement

Since slow learners have cognitive challenges, they require more time to understand the learning material. Therefore, teachers need patience and diligence in adapting the teaching process to the abilities of slow learners. On average, teachers at SMP Negeri 22 Surakarta repeat the material when students do not understand it.

### 4. Good social interaction

Although many students with disabilities or special needs, especially slow learners, find it difficult to interact or have low self-confidence, some slow learners are easygoing and good at social interaction, whether with peers, teachers, or people around them. In their school environment, regular students also support one another, so students with special needs, especially slow learners, can feel comfortable without being discriminated against. This enhances students' confidence in interacting. However, when interacting with their conversation partners, they tend to look around instead of at the person they are talking to, as they cannot make direct or two-way eye contact.

### 5. Lack of motivation to learn

At SMP Negeri 22 Surakarta, there are some slow learners who have high motivation to learn, but there are also students with low motivation. Due to a lack of motivation to learn, some slow learners often skip school. However, the school always strives to find various ways to increase students' motivation to learn so that they are enthusiastic about learning. For example, when students skip school, the accompanying teacher and principal usually conduct home visits and take a more personal approach with the students.

## The Needs of Slow Learners in the Learning Process

Once teachers understand the characteristics of slow learners, they must also understand the learning needs of these students in the learning process.

### 1. The need for a different learning approach

In the learning process, teachers should use a personalized approach. Typically, after an explanation or lesson, teachers will ask students about their understanding, for example, "Do you understand?" or "Which parts do you not understand?" If necessary, teachers can also schedule additional learning sessions to optimize student understanding, but these additional learning sessions depend on student availability.

### 2. Need for longer and more flexible learning time

Slow learners are able to complete assignments or homework, but they need more time to do so, usually around 2-3 days. Teachers can also modify the number of questions given to students with special needs, especially slow learners. For example, instead of 10 questions,



they can be given 5 questions with the same weight. This can facilitate the learning process for students.

### 3. The need for an emotionally supportive learning environment

SMP Negeri 22 Surakarta is an inclusive school, so its learning environment is supportive, with a special inclusion room for students with special needs. Students with severe disabilities are usually pulled out of class and taught in the inclusion room. Additionally, the accompanying teacher will conduct outreach to all school personnel, including teachers, students, staff, security, and school guards, with the aim of creating a comfortable environment for students with special needs.

### 4. The need to boost the confidence of slow learners

In order to address the low confidence levels of some slow learners and other students with special needs, teaching assistants will begin to explore and discover the interests and talents of students from the seventh grade onwards. Students who have identified their interests and talents will receive support from teachers by participating in extracurricular activities aligned with their interests and talents. Additionally, during specific school events, teachers will provide opportunities for slow learners or other students with special needs to showcase their interests and talents. The aim is to facilitate their integration with peers and enhance their self-confidence.

### 5. The need to increase the motivation of slow learners

Some slow learners have low motivation to learn, to the point that they do not even want to go to school. The school tries its best to increase the students' motivation to learn. For example, the assistant teacher will take an individual approach by giving positive affirmations before the lesson begins, such as "Let's study hard!" For students who refuse to attend school, the school administration, including the principal and teachers, will conduct home visits to the students' homes. The principal and teachers will identify the root causes of the students' refusal to attend school in order to provide support aimed at improving their learning motivation.

## Learning Process Strategies for Slow Learners

According to Supriyani, et al (2022), the strategies needed by teachers or educators during the teaching and learning process are:

a). Accommodation of learning materials and teaching methods, teachers' adjustments in delivering learning materials according to students' characteristics and learning styles, such as: student-centered learning so that slow learners can be active in the learning process, repeated explanations of materials with emphasis on certain topics to help students understand the material being presented, the use of simple and clear language, and the use of digital learning media to reinforce students' understanding. Florian (2015) states that learning materials tailored to students' needs reflect an inclusive school approach.

b). Accommodation of tasks and research, Teachers modify the assignment of tasks and learning evaluations according to students' abilities. Some slow learners need repeated explanations of task instructions. Utami (2018:145) explains that when delivering material,



teachers need to repeat their explanations, and if an individual approach is taken, the results achieved will be optimal. Assignments and homework for slow learners should be different from those for regular students.

c). Accommodation services for time requirements: Teachers provide more time for slow learners to study and ensure that students are not stressed during the learning process. This service is a policy implemented by teachers to extend and flexibly adjust the time allotted for completing assignments for slow learners (Rahmawati, 2018). Parents who add extra time for individual guidance for their children, such as increasing study hours at home, helping with homework, inquiring about the student's progress at school with the teacher, and attending school meetings, are alternative approaches for slow learners (Desiningrum, 2016:15).

d). Accommodation services for classroom environment management: Teachers manage the classroom according to the characteristics and needs of the students to create a comfortable and conducive classroom atmosphere. In accommodating the classroom, slow learners are placed at the front of the class (Mumpuniarti in Misky, 2021:62). Teachers who provide positive reinforcement in learning process achievements will enhance and maintain learning motivation in the classroom (Marno & Idris, 2014:130).

In addition to accommodation services, there are three basic strategies that are important for teachers in implementing the learning process, namely: Identifying, detailing, and classifying the desired changes in students' attitudes and characteristics; Selecting learning methods tailored to slow learners and the surrounding environment; Selecting and determining the most effective and appropriate learning processes, methods, and strategies so that teachers can apply them in teaching and learning activities (Misky R. et al., 2021).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Slow learners are still able to follow the school curriculum, but in the learning process, slow learners require adjustments to some learning programs. However, they require different treatment from regular students and need a little more time. Common characteristics of slow learners include difficulty in understanding abstract concepts; slow academic development; the need for repetition and reinforcement; good social interaction; and a lack of motivation to learn. Once teachers understand the characteristics of slow learners, they must also understand the students' learning needs and strategies for the learning process. Teachers' knowledge of the characteristics and needs of slow learners, as well as teaching strategies, enables them to adapt their teaching methods to the abilities of slow learners, thereby facilitating the learning process and making it easier for slow learners to understand the learning material effectively.

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