

# Teacher Communication Ability in Supporting Art Achievement of Students with Disability

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## Teacher Communication Ability in Supporting Art Achievement of Students with Disability

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### ABSTRACT

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The education of students with disabilities has been the focus worldwide since the 1960s. The Indonesian government organizes special schools as a particular means of educating students with disabilities. Communication is part of the educational process that affects children's disabilities, and the teacher's communication skills play an essential role in the education of students with disabilities. This study examined teachers' communication skills in supporting students with disabilities in the arts. The study used a qualitative method with eight teachers, five parents, and ten students. The research was complemented by observations and document studies at SLB Fitria, an SLB with achievements in the arts. The study found that the teacher's communication abilities in teaching students with disabilities include the ability to communicate flexibly using various ways appropriate to the personal conditions and conditions of students' disabilities and the ability to encourage and motivate students to be involved and perform well. The study found that other factors support the artistic achievement of students with disabilities and the teacher's communication skills, namely parental support and the learning system in school. This study suggests paying particular attention to the teacher's communication skills in teaching. The teacher's communication abilities have overcome other shortcomings in their resources (educational background), school shortages (availability of facilities and infrastructure), and student deficiencies.

**Keywords:** art, communication ability, SLB, student with disabilities, teachers

### INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has paid attention to children's education with special needs. The Indonesian government has issued Government Regulation No. 13 of 2020 concerning Adequate Accommodation for Students with Disabilities and Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 70/2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and Potential Intelligence or Special Talents. The Indonesian government provides educational units for children with special needs. The particular educational institution for children with disabilities is Special School (SLB in the Indonesian language) (Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia No. 72/1991, concerning Special Education). SLB consists of early childhood education, primary and secondary education (Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning Management of Educational Implementation, article 133). However, the disparity in the net enrollment rate (NER) between persons with disabilities compared to non-disabled groups still occurs. The highest NER score gap is at the high school level and the equivalent, at 27.37%, compared to the NER for non-disabled persons of 61.48% (CBS, 2020).

Communication is part of the educational process that affects children's disabilities. The educational system for children with disabilities is inclusive education (Imaniah & Fitria, 2018; Anzari, Sarong, & Rasyid, 2018). Inclusive education emphasizes good communication between teachers, parents, and students with disabilities (Aldabas, 2021; ul Ain, 2021). Good communication helps the educational process of children with disabilities (Adeleke et al., 2020;

Kausik & Hussain, 2021). In addition, appropriate education can help children with disabilities improve their social skills, including communication skills (Guivarch et al., 2017; Harrowell et al., 2018; Shalev & Hetzroni, 2020).

Teacher communication skills play an essential role in the education of students with disabilities. Communication between teachers and students with disabilities plays a role in helping students with disabilities to develop their abilities without being hampered by their condition (Polivara et al., 2017; Hanurawan, 2017). Likewise, communication between supervisors and students with disabilities helps students with disabilities feel facilitated and can demonstrate their abilities (Hasim & Rahayu, 2020). An excellent educational process is even able to make students with disabilities work in the arts (Hasim & Rahayu, 2020), entrepreneurship (Firdaus & Hasanah, 2018), or in increasing other knowledge (Kelrey, 2020; Putri & Kurniasari, 2020).

The teacher's communication skills in educating students with disabilities include augmentative and alternative abilities (Aldabas, 2021), the ability to communicate in various ways according to the conditions of students' disabilities (Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017), skills communication that pays attention to the personal condition of children with persons with disabilities (Polivara et al., 2017; Hanurawan, 2017; Rino, Maryam, & Priliantini, 2020; Martin et al., 2017). The teacher's augmentative and alternative communication skills and knowledge are assessed from the educational background and training that the teacher has received (Aldabas, 2021). Teachers' augmentative and alternative communication skills are supported by supporting facilities in schools and students' abilities (Aldabas, 2021). The teacher's communication skills include encouraging students with disabilities to communicate in the learning process (Fitriya, 2020). The teacher's communication ability can be observed from the teaching competence and the teacher's ability to motivate students (Fitriya, 2020; Suraji, 2012: 240). Specifically for education in the arts, previous research has examined the role of art in the education of students with disabilities (Alter-Muri, 2017; Koch & Thompson, 2017; Sjöqvist et al., 2021). However, there has not been much research on teachers' communication skills in teaching art to students with disabilities.

This study examined teachers' communication skills in supporting students with disabilities in the arts. The research was conducted at Fitria SLB Bogor City because the SLB has an arts group for people with disabilities and has a particular trainer to train children with disabilities. The art group of SLB Fitria, Bogor City, has achieved achievements in the arts, namely the second winner in a dance competition and the first winner in drawing a pole in the city of Bogor. In addition, SLB Fitria has organized several independent art performances at the city level to be considered to have succeeded in providing art lessons to students with disabilities.

## METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods with the primary data collection techniques: interviews and observations. Qualitative research methods to assess teacher communication skills in teaching students with disabilities were used in previous studies (Hasim & Rahayu, 2020; Priliantini, Maryam, & Rino, 2020; Hanum, 2014). The qualitative research method follows this study because the researcher intends to examine open communication skills from the participant's side (Creswell, 2014, pp. 7-8).

Research participants were one principal, eight teachers, and 27 SLB Fitria Bogor City students. One art teacher is the leading participant—the other teachers and parents of students as supporting participants. The number of SLB Fitria students is 27 people. Student participants were selected based on their involvement and achievements in the arts. Supporting participants was determined by the technique snowballing. The number of supporting participants was

determined according to the data saturation when conducting the study (Ghaljaie, Naderifar, & Goli, 2017; Geddes, Parker, & Scott, 2018).

Researchers formulate research questions referring to previous research on teacher communication skills in teaching students with disabilities. These concepts are derived from several previous studies on teacher communication in teaching students with disabilities.

Table 1. Dimensions of Teacher Communication Ability and Main Source

No	Teacher Communication Ability	Dimension of	Main Source
1	Augmentative and alternative abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Augmentative and alternative abilities</li> <li>· Teaching skills</li> <li>· Educational background</li> <li>· Training received</li> <li>· School facility support</li> <li>· Students' ability</li> </ul>	Aldabas (2021)
2	Teacher's communication	Ability to communicate in various ways according to students' disability conditions	Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland (2017)
		Communication ability that pays attention to the personal students' disability conditions	Polivara <i>et al.</i> (2017); Hanurawan (2017); Rino, Maryam, and Priliantini (2020); Martin <i>et al.</i> (2017)
		Ability to encourage students with disabilities to communicate in the learning process	Fitrya (2020)
3	Teaching competence	The ability of teachers to teach is one of the essential things for the artistic competence of students with disabilities	Suraji (2012: 240)
4	Teacher motivation	The teacher's ability to encourage, increase enthusiasm, and independence of students with disabilities in learning the art	Fitrya (2020)

Source: Processed from various sources

This study carried out analytical steps. First is examined the general condition of students and teachers at SLB Fitria. This step is to determine the general description of the condition of students with disabilities, the condition of teachers and learning facilities in SLB. Second is conducting interviews with participants regarding the teacher's communication skills and assessing whether other factors affect student achievement in the arts besides the teacher's communication ability. Third is perform data analysis. The data analysis process is carried out by grouping, writing, and confirming the data. The research process was carried out from September-October 2021.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Conditions of Students and Teachers at Fitria

Special School Bogor City Data in Figures (CBS City of Bogor, 2021) does not present data for SLB in Bogor City. However, based on West Java data searches, there is one State SLB and eight private SLBs (CBS West Java, 2021). Fitria Special School is one of the private



special schools located in Harjasari RT01/RW 07, Harjasari, South Bogor, Bogor City West Java 16720. Fitria Special School is an ABCD Special School or SLB for students with disabilities who are blind, deaf, mentally retarded, and physically disabled (KMK Ministry of Education and Culture, October 1, 2020). SLB Fitria already has achievements in the arts, namely second place in a drawing competition, first place in a dance competition at the Bogor City level, and the Bogor City SLB art group has presented an art performance at the Kemuning Building in Bogor City.

The number of Fitria SLB students in 2021 is 27 students. Fitria SLB students are primarily students with mental retardation disabilities totaling 22 people and students with hearing impairments totaling five people. There are no forms of disability for the blind and quadriplegic at SLB Fitria. Based on gender, there were 12 female students and 15 male students. The age of the students ranged from 7-20 years. The students are spread out as students in grades 1-12, with the highest number of students in grade 6 being five people and at least grade 3 students being one person.

There are eight teachers at SLB Fitria. Two teachers have the status of Civil Servants, and six teachers are permanent teachers of the foundation. The Fitria SLB all act as classroom teachers and teachers who teach specific subjects, such as art lessons. The oldest teacher has 13 experience of 21 years, and the newest has eight years. Based on the level of education, two teachers have a bachelor's degree in Special Education, and one is a Japanese Literature graduate, one is a religion teacher, one is a first diploma, one is in high school, and two are continuing their undergraduate education.

Learning facilities at SLB Fitria consist of classrooms, library rooms, laboratory rooms, practice rooms, leadership rooms, teachers' rooms, and worship rooms. There are seven classrooms and two teachers' rooms. The other rooms are one room each.

### Teacher Communication Ability

Referring to the condition of students at Fitria Special School who have mental retardation and 10fness, the discussion focuses on these two forms of disability. World attention to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities has increased since the 1960s and grew in the 1980s, along with the increasing world attention to social justice (Parmenter & Thompson, 2017). This attention includes the development of attention to the provision of support in health, education, and others that ensure the fulfillment of their rights (Parmenter & Thompson, 2017). Understanding developmentally disabled students has dimensions of personal, public, critical, and definitional understanding (Brown, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2017). All four show adjectives for a person or group of children who have developmental delays or individuals, groups of individuals who have deficiencies due to developmental delays, or intellectual and developmental limitations (Brown, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2017). They distinguish between intellectual disability, developmental disability or disability, and developmental delay. Students with hearing impairments have special needs in communication because they have limited hearing. This limitation has been resolved with the use of sign language.

The composition of teacher educational background shows that only two teachers have adequate background to provide education to students with disabilities. Only two teachers have an undergraduate education background in special education. However, the inadequate formal educational background is complemented by the experience of teaching students with disabilities. Only one teacher has the most recent teaching experience with eight years of teaching experience. Other teachers have 9, 10, 12, 13, and 17 years of teaching experience. Especially for the arts, there are no teachers who have a background in art education. Participant 2 became an art teacher because he had exemplary drawing skills. The educational background supporting teacher communication skills (Aldabas, 2021) lacks formal education but has adequate teaching experience. The most visible deficiency is in art education.

The educational support facilities at SLB Fitria are still considered lacking by Participant 3 as a teacher and Participant 9 as parents of students. *"The facilities and infrastructure at SLB Fitria are not supportive. Laboratory facilities and supporting facilities to support artistic activities such as musical instruments are inadequate."* (Participant 9, personal interview, September 22, 2021).

Concluded, school facilities to support teacher-student communication are inadequate—the lack of facilities complemented by the teaching skills of teachers. According to Participant 3, teachers use existing learning facilities to support teaching and learning.

The teacher's teaching skills factor complements the student's lack of communication skills. Students with disabilities at SLB Fitria lack communication at the beginning of the learning period. In Indonesia, **people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or mental retardation** lack communication skills (Bach, 2017). In addition, students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (mental retardation) have difficulty communicating with new people (Goode, Jones, & Christopher, 2017). Therefore, the teacher's role is essential in encouraging the willingness and ability of developmentally disabled students (Condillac & Baker, 2017). Therefore, the teacher communicates with students with disabilities at SLB Fitria in stages. *"New students are usually shy to communicate. They rarely talk in class, let alone engage in the practice. Often students talk not connected with the learning topic. The teachers slowly encourage students to speak. First, talk about what is important to be active in class. Gradually, students began to be active in communication between friends and teachers in class."* (Participant 1, personal interview, September 6, 2021).

The students confirmed the opinion of the teacher participants. Five student participants confirmed that the process of communicating with the teacher caused their confidence to increase to communicate and work. The participant also confirmed that the thing that stood out from the teacher was the teacher's patience in encouraging students to want to be involved in learning in class. The teacher communication factor studied through the teacher's ability to encourage students with disabilities to communicate **in the learning process** (Fitriya, 2020) **has been quite good.**

The teacher's ability to encourage students to learn is related to the teacher's ability to motivate students. Education by promoting supportive behavior from all parts of education and good communication with **people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or mental retardation** are needed to support their development (Condillac & Baker, 2017). The ability of teacher motivation is the ability of teachers to provide encouragement, increase enthusiasm and independence of students with disabilities in learning arts (Fitriya, 2020). The ability of teacher motivation can be observed from the way the teacher teaches. One teacher said: *"We teachers must be diligent in inviting the children to chat one by one so that they are close and can motivate them according to their circumstances."* (Participant 5, personal interview, September 15, 2021). *"Teachers motivate students to solve their problems so they can motivate themselves and others. The teacher motivates students according to their disability conditions and personality. Sometimes students with the same disability do not have the same personal abilities. So the teacher must know the student's personality in providing motivation."* (Participant 1, personal interview, September 16, 2021).

The ability to communicate in various ways according to the conditions of students' disabilities (Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017) mentally retarded refers to the ability of teachers to communicate with deaf and students. Participant 4 was strengthened by Participant 5, who revealed that apart from the problem of student disability, problems were also present because every child has a mood that often changes. The approach taken by the teacher is to communicate with a family approach in addition to paying attention to the condition of students' disabilities. *"Communication by teachers is like a family so that teachers and children with disabilities do not feel distant. Teachers communicate with their children. If students seem*

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*not in the mood, we usually invite them to joke. Teaching students with disabilities should be different from teaching ordinary students. The teacher must be patient and see the condition of the students. For example, the teacher uses sign language to the deaf students.*" (Participant 4, personal interview, September 17, 2021). *"So far, students with hearing impairment sometimes can catch the lesson, sometimes not. Every child has their shortcomings. For example, a student named MR can only catch a lesson if the lesson is delivered slowly, or is written down or given an example."* (Participant 5, personal interview, September 16, 2021).

The willingness of teachers to pay attention to students' moods shows that teachers have skills communication that pays attention to the personal conditions of children with disabilities (Polivara et al., 2017; Hanurawan, 2017; Rino, Maryam, and Priliantini, 2020; Martin et al., 2017).

The participants agreed that the teacher must understand what the students are experiencing in the teaching process. For example, when students do not want to do something, the teacher will persuade students slowly. Giving gifts in the form of praise, snacks, or being asked to come forward is an approach that is considered appropriate by the teacher in encouraging and motivating students to learn. In line with Cypher (2017), the communication process with students with disabilities requires a particular approach that emphasizes adult education and respects students' strengths and weaknesses. The willingness of teachers to understand students' moods and produce progress in students' communication skills shows that the communication process between teachers and students in the classroom and outside the classroom requires skills to use and understand verbal and non-verbal messages with an emphasis on appreciation and support (Baldwin & Jeffress, 2017).

Learning in the arts with teachers who do not have an artistic background shows positive results. The artistic achievement of Fitria SLB students is quite good. The way art teachers communicate is no different from other teachers. The process of the teacher trying to understand, understand, and direct slowly is the way the teacher does it. *"We as teachers must first introduce students to what we are going to teach. For example, we want to introduce the student to dancing, so the teacher gives examples of dance movements. Then, we will see if the students are excited. If we are excited, we will continue. If not, let us get excited first. After students are interested, students are directed to follow the dance movements, then the student is directed to practice dancing. If the student is good enough, we direct the student to participate in a dance competition. Through the learning process, the teacher can find out what students like. Teachers should see what students are more enthusiastic about in what field. That is what is directed further."* (Participant 2, personal interview, October 20, 2021).

The drawing achievements of student participants confirmed the opinion of Participant 2. *"I have loved drawing since I was little. My parents always showed me good pictures and encouraged me to draw my own at home. I was taught drawing at school. After studying at Fitria Special School, I feel that my drawing skills have improved, and it turns out that I can make good drawings."* (Participant 10, personal interview, October 20, 2021).

The teachers at Fitria SLB have teaching competence. The teachers teach by example and encourage students to participate actively in class. The teacher participants agreed that the arts and general learning process were appropriate learning methods. For example, the teachers teach students with disabilities various kinds of dance moves, and then the students are directed to follow the instructions of the teacher teaching the students slowly. Teacher participants agreed that students with disabilities, especially developmentally disabled persons, were more interested in direct practical activities, developmentally disabled students were more interested in art activities, such as painting, dancing, and sports activities.

The teacher participants agreed that imposing learning speed and focusing on targets was inappropriate for students with disabilities. Teachers cannot focus on results. Learning achievement targets make it difficult for teachers to adapt to students' abilities and



circumstances. Art learning cannot focus on achievements or competitions but follows the ability and willingness of students. Although slow, this process is quite successful. The success of the learning process is shown by the learning outcomes in the form of the achievements of SLB Fitria students in the arts. This achievement shows that the ability of teachers to teach is one of the essential things for the artistic competence of students with disabilities (Suraji, 2012: 240).

### **Supporting Factors Outside Teacher's Communication Ability**

The study found important supporting factors in supporting the artistic achievement of students with disabilities, namely from parents. According to teacher participants, students with parents constantly encourage students to perform better than students with parents who do not. Parents' encouragement is taking children to school, interacting at home, and repeating the learning methods taught in class. *"The most important supporting factor for students' artistic achievement is the support of students' parents. Parents must support their children. Forms of support can be started from small things. For example, picking up children from school, often interacting with children at home, and practicing learning outcomes in class at home. Parental support is very influential in the intellectual development of children. Students with parents who pay attention to students have better artistic achievements than students with parents who are indifferent."* (Participant 2, personal interview, October 27, 2021).

The parents' role in supporting the teacher and student with disabilities communication is essential. Another factor that supports teacher and student communication in improving student artistic achievement is the learning system in schools. Teachers at SLB Fitria use system modeling when teaching children to draw. The teacher gives a picture work such as a picture of a fish then the students imitate the picture and modify the work according to the wishes of each child. The teacher participants agreed that the process of giving an example of work and the student imitating the example was more appropriate than asking students to work on their own directly. Participant 2 conveys an approach that emphasizes children's creativity, which is only chosen if it turns out that students prefer to work on their own rather than following examples. However, the learning process by giving examples is still considered the most appropriate way for students' conditions when research is carried out.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Research at Fitria Special School in Bogor City found that teachers' communication skills in teaching art subjects to students with disabilities include the ability to communicate flexibly using various ways appropriate to the personal conditions and conditions of students' disabilities and the ability to encourage motivate students to engage and achieve. In addition, factors of educational background, training received, and support for school facilities can be overcome by teaching experience.

Students with disabilities, especially mental retardation, lack communication ability. This deficiency can be overcome by providing encouragement and motivation from teachers to students. The proper communication process for teaching art is a communication process that runs slowly, adjusts to students' moods, and does not impose learning achievement targets on students. The most appropriate way of learning art subjects is learning by doing, giving examples, and encouraging praise and participation in competitions. The study found that other factors support the artistic achievement of students with disabilities and the teacher's communication skills. These factors are parental support and the learning system in schools.

This study suggests paying particular attention to the teacher's communication skills in teaching art. The teacher's communication skills have overcome other shortcomings in their resources (educational background), school shortages (availability of facilities and



infrastructure), and student deficiencies. Communication skills that support the artistic achievement of students with disabilities are the ability to communicate that encourages, motivates, adapts to students' moods and limitations.

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Lecturer of the Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Djuanda, researcher and lecturer with 14 years of research and teaching experience, graduated from Doctoral Degree in Sociology, the University of Indonesia in January 2021, has been involved in 43 research programs, the author first/independently at 18 international seminars and three national seminars, compiled 12 books with a team, independent author of 5 national journals, members of the Bogor City Education Council 2019-2023, ICMI and several other social organizations.



# Teacher Communication Ability in Supporting Art Achievement of Students with Disability

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