

# *Center of Disability Services: Lesson Learned from INDOEDUC4ALL Consortiums Universities in Indonesia*

Silfia Asningtias  
English Department  
Universitas Negeri Surabaya  
Surabaya, Indonesia  
silfiaasningtias@unesa.ac.id

**Abstract**—This research aims to elaborate on the best practices of universities in establishing the center of disabilities services in Indonesia, reflecting from the counterpart universities from European countries. How this lesson learned then translated and reflected on the journey to establish the center or enhancing the services to achieve the objectives, ensuring access to education for a student with disabilities in higher education. This study employs qualitative research methods in reflection on self. On how the universities struggle to establish the center for disabilities, as well as the challenges of the established ones upon the running of the center. The study highlights the role of supports from all the stakeholders, including from the INDOEDUC4ALL projects funded by Erasmus+ and the European Commission. On how the project has enhanced the role of the center through the systematized and organized achievable work packages. The result is yet showing the fully accomplished, however, evidence shows that this project has directed in the right way on how the center of disability will open the door for people with disability to have equal access towards education in university level.

**Keywords**—Center for Disabilities; INDOEDUC4ALL; Inclusive Education; Higher Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that everyone has the right to education, inclusive education promotes equal access to education. In other words, all children, including the ones with special needs are also having an equal opportunity to education [1]. Drawing from personal experiences, many times children with special needs face rejection from regular schools putting forward lack of infrastructure and facilities as well unprepared teachers to handle students with disability in the classroom as the main reasons. Moreover, in a recent case in Indonesia, a capable and competent medical doctor faced a harsh reality of rejection to become a government employee since she is paraplegia [2]. As stated in one of the requirements of being a government employee is one to be physically and mentally healthy, thus, being in a wheelchair hinder the candidate to pass the requirement, although the person scores highest in the test and place in number one rank. There are many cases similar regarding the discrimination to the people with disability,

which is rooted from a weak commitment from all parties related.

Established in 2016, the project of Indoeduc4all lead by the University Alicante has gathered universities consortium in Indonesia and Europe to run a project with the theme of ‘Ensuring Access and Quality Education for students with disabilities in Indonesian universities (INDOEDUC4ALL)’. This project is co-financed by the European Commission through the erasmus+ program. Aiming at the development of capacities of its member in addressing the educational need of students with disabilities, INDOEDUC4ALL project support its consortium universities in ensuring education accessibility for students with disabilities and building up disability support unit equipped with assistive technologies. Throughout the project, the consortium universities have been working hand in hand to establish the center of disabilities for those who have not yet have one or strengthening the center of disabilities by equipping with the assistive technologies as well as the training for lecturers and staff at the university. This research elaborates the best practices of consortium universities in INDOEDUC4ALL projects through the journey of establishing Inclusive education in Higher Education. The implications of this research for how inclusive education in Higher Education can be established and supported in Indonesia will be elaborated.

Reflecting on the journey of establishing a support center for students with disabilities in higher education, two main issues are mainly discussed :

1. In terms of establishing the center, what are the key factors that come into play to successfully create one?
2. To what extent INDOEDUC4ALL project has an impact on their establishment of the center of disabilities in the university.S

## II. METHODOLOGY

Establishing a support center for students with disabilities following the law no. 8/2016 requires a strong commitment from the stakeholders in the institution. This reflective journey of university’s effort to create the disability

support center elaborates the initiative of the disability support centers, which then lead to disseminating the services in the internal system, building networks with the related institutions to advocating policy to ensure equal access and quality education for students with disability. Employing qualitative research, the researcher collects data through interviews, documents, video, and reflection which later examined and interpreted.

Since qualitative analysis is non-linear and complex, data collection, analysis and reporting will be a dynamic process, in which the researcher comprehend the issues, synthesize and explain the relationship. According to Ary, D [3] that qualitative analysis is broken down into three key stages, 1) organizing and familiarizing 2) coding and reducing, 3) interpreting and representing. Through all the stages, the data then transcribed and interpreted to come out with an analysis of the data.

As previously mentioned, this study is a reflective approach as part of the qualitative research. Although a reflective journal is common in the qualitative research, there is limited literature on the use of reflecting journal in methodological perspective as part of the research process [4]. In this study, the author keeps the journal since the beginning of the project to keep track of works and progress as well as the lesson learned and best practices from the whole journey.

### III. RESULT

Explicitly listed in Law no.8/2016 [5], there are 33 rights of people with disabilities which is protected and guaranteed by the government of Indonesia. Besides that, the central and local government has to ensure accessibility of education in all level for people with disabilities, in the article no.42, mentioned the mandate to all level of education, including higher education to establish a unit of disabilities services. Moreover, in the points of explanations of no. 3, these unit is functioned a) to improve teachers competencies to facilitate learning of children with disabilities in regular school b) to coordinate each unit at the university to support students' with disabilities learning c) to supervise and evaluate implementation of decent accommodation d) provide counseling services to participants students with disabilities e) conduct early detection of students who are indicated with disabilities f) refer students indicated by disability to doctors, psychologists, or psychiatrists d) provide information on the understanding of disability and an inclusive education system for educators, education staff and students. To impose these laws to the university, it is mentioned that Higher education providers that do not form a Disability Service Unit are subject to administrative sanctions. This is to show how serious the government of Indonesia would like to ensure equality for students to access higher education in Indonesia. In specifically mentioned in the law, article 44, Higher education institutions that provide teacher education must include courses on inclusive education in the curriculum.

Reflecting on the journey of establishing a support center for students with disabilities, three key elements can be drawn.

First, the reinforcement from the government to ensure that all the citizen have an equal opportunity to quality education. Therefore, the law no.8/2016 [5] on people with disabilities then enacted to encourage the establishment of a center for students with disability in each institution. In the article 42, which mainly assure that the university should be inclusive, it is mentioned on the role of the center of disability in the university. Among others are raising awareness on providing services for students with a disability, upgrading competencies of lectures to teach students with different abilities. Lectures need to be aware of teaching for students with hearing and visual impairment for example. Another thing imposed in the decree is the service provided for early detection of disabilities from the doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist. Lastly, the function of evaluating and monitoring the support provided for students with disabilities. In conclusion, these roles which then clearly direct the universities on the establishment of the center.

Secondly, the strong leadership of the university key holders towards providing supports for the students with disability to get equal access to education and quality services. This commitment is very crucial to take policy comes into actions. The university with a strong leader who commits towards providing support for students with disabilities will not only energized the whole level of stakeholders to pledge the same but also influence the policymaking with regards to facilitating students with disabilities. The imposing of the law will be fortified by strong leadership and commitment towards disability.

The last key element to successfully establish the center of disability is a dedication of the people to work tirelessly to advocate the equal access and opportunity for students with disabilities and ensure that the students with disabilities get the support they need. These group of people who extend their hands to providing these services includes the top management, the lectures and the most important is the volunteers as the strong bone of the structure. Center might be established, however, without the committed volunteers, it will be challenging to keep the running of the organization. The key success of the center to run is good management, a well-structured program and a strong base of volunteers. These three will assure that students with disabilities will get the facilities they need.

INDOEDUCALL project involved 3 consortium universities in Europe, namely University of Alicante (UA), Spain, the Piraeus University of Applied Sciences (UPRC), Greece and Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU), Scotland. Meanwhile, the Indonesian partner universities are Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM), UIN Sunan Kalijaga (UIN SUKA), UIN Syarif Hidayatullah (UIN Jakarta), IAIN Surakarta (IAIN Surakarta), Universitas Indonesia (UI). The project is also involved SIGAB as an NGO which actively involved in advocacy for people with disabilities. The main goal is ensuring access and quality education for students with disabilities in Indonesian universities. The implementation of the goal, the project

provides supports to partner universities to ensure education accessibility for students with disabilities, establishing disability support units equipped with assistive technologies.

In line with the erasmus+ funding on capacity building in the field of higher education, the project is targeting all the stakeholders in higher education system, including the students with disabilities, lecturers, universities and national top managers as well as the administrative staff at the university to ensure that all elements in the university are aware of supporting the students with disabilities. Besides, the project is also targeting schools and other universities in the national network to raise awareness in establishing disabilities unit at their respective universities. This is a long-term strategy for the access and retention of students with disabilities in the Indonesian education system.

The project is then distributed in work packages, from developing training modules, the center of disabilities establishment to purchasing the assistive equipment to support the center. The work packages are also requiring each university to accomplish the objectives.

Work Package one is focussing on needs analysis and transfer know-how. At this point, Indonesian universities were invited to visit University Alicante, Spain and UPRC, Greece to collect good practices guide for disability management service. On the data collection of the work package 1, it incorporates quantitative by providing questionnaires and qualitative by holding a focus group for real analysis of students with disabilities. First, the research team was set up by each university to send one representative. Then, each university completes a questionnaire on general services and structures as well as identifying services for disability students at the university. Focus group then organized to evaluate the level of satisfaction and expectation, which will then analyzed and serve as a background study. The outcome is raising awareness about students with disabilities access to university premises and education provision.

Meanwhile, the work package 2 is aiming at increased knowledge on the area of inclusive education focussing on students with disabilities. The tangible deliverables are the module adaption of the training as well as training activities in the respected universities. For this work package, Glasgow Caledonian University and Universitas Negeri Surabaya are particularly in charge in collaboration with GCU to design the training module and Unesa to set the module adaptation. This is to ensure the case studies and context are adapted to a more localized Indonesian's setting. The training of 8 training modules are; 1) Understanding inclusive education, 2) inclusive education, 3) practical implementation of legal obligation within higher education institution, 4) and 5) students support service, 6) Disability strategic plan, 7) post-education: labor market integration and opportunities and 8) Disability and gender equality.

The third work package is one of the main interest to measure the success of the project, that is the establishment or refreshment of the disability support center. This is to say in

line with the spirit of Law no.8/2016, which is to ensure the student of disability have equal access and quality education. Considering the ultimate needs to establish a support center, the project aims to support the partner universities to commit on the establishment of the center, and second, to design a 3-year strategic plan of the support center. At this point, the target is to have 4 new established centers and 2 centers are refreshed. This works package is also emphasizing creating a national network for the sustainability of the project. The aims are to contribute to the promotion of inclusive education practices in Indonesia, promoting dialogue as well as networking.

Along with the success of establishing the disability service center, the work package four is mainly aiming at providing further support for the center in regards to the assistive technology infrastructure. With the assumption that there is a strong need to equip the center of disability service in the institution with assistive technology so that students with disability can access the quality of learning. The assistive chosen for the centers are mainly to accommodate all types of disability, ranging from the blind and low vision, hearing impairment as well as low or no mobility. To support further on meeting the objectives, the partner universities are first trained on how to select the types of equipment that accommodate the needs and later on trained on how to optimize the potential of the equipment. The assistive technologies section also comes with the handbook that we can refer to.

One of the most important aspects for students with disabilities upon finishing their study is to open a better opportunity for a work placement to demonstrate their ability. Knowing the risks that highschools and enterprise are not welcome on volunteers and internship program, underlying the work package five. Outreach to high school is meant to spread the information of higher education opportunities which most of the time becomes of the problem facing students with disabilities, lack of information. For that reason, the work package requires to create information day session, in which high school students with disabilities are invited to come to university to get access on information on programs or path for students with disabilities to enter, by ensuring that the university will also provide service to assist this student through the support center. This information day can also work by volunteer coming to highschools to disseminate the information. Beside highschools, the work package is also putting more focus on the involvement of business sectors corporate social responsibility through an internship program for students with disabilities. This program will promote inclusive and accessible workplace, which later on overcome barrier for students to get experience in the business sector to be employable when graduate.

Quality Control and Monitoring Measures are the next important thing in the list of work package six. The purpose is to maintain a watch on quality to assure the project actions are properly executed and the output produced is in high quality.

Monitoring tools will be employed to measure progress and quality in terms of expected deliverables and indicators.

The last one is on the dissemination and exploitation activity through several actions. For instance, the organization of 3 open days, regional conferences and the final conference. Open days are meant to open information for highschools students as well as other education stakeholders in general regarding the access to higher education for students with disabilities. Meanwhile, the conferences are aimed to build regional and international networks. These activities underpin the entire project objectives, which is to promote and create dialogue. For the management aspects, the contingency plan set up to anticipate risks at project commencement as the first step in project adjustment.

From six consortium universities in Indonesia, UIN SUKA and UNESA have a well-established center of disabilities which get rejuvenated by the project of INDOEDUC4ALL. The commitment of the project to support the center by facilitating the assistive technology equipment is paramount to be learned. How establishing the center is not enough without a commitment to good governance or management. Meanwhile, the rest of the four universities, UIN Jakarta, ULM, UI and IAIN Surakarta was assisted in creating their support center, making vision, mission and strategic plan of their respective center.

Apart from the support on the establishment of the center and providing assistive technology equipment, the project also successfully designed the module for training intended for both lecturer and staff to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. This module then replicated through several workshops in respective universities. The objective is to raise awareness of lecturer and staff at the universities for students with disabilities as well as knowing how to facilitate the needs of disabled students based on their spectrum. All in all, the training module is intended to reach a wider audience in the higher education system.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The key elements that have been discussed will be more effective when infrastructure and system are set to accommodate students with a special need. The strong commitment of top leaders in the university will then decide on the design of the building that ensures that students with a physical limitation can access it. A small example is on having a ramp for wheelchair students to enter a building, having guiding blocks or a lavatory that meet the needs of students with disabilities [6]. This simple act will speak loud of the institutional commitment towards inclusive campus. As Budiyo, et al [7] asserts that to establish inclusive education, it is not mainly about the cost, it is about commitment.

Another point in check is the system or the curriculum. These will include the curriculum as the documents which requires adjustment on points that it should have calls accommodating students with special needs. The curriculum,

in this case, is also about the awareness of lecturers to teach students with different abilities. How lecturers are aware of teaching students with cerebral palsy or spectrum of Autism. The curriculum should be designed that all students will be well-facilitated in the teaching and learning activities.

The commitment of the university towards people with disability can also be a witness through the policy of open access for university education through affirmation path. UIN SUKA has set a good example in this case, that since 2007, they committed to open their door to students with disabilities in all majors [8]. The commitment is then translated to the establishment of the disability support center, which is a pioneer among Indonesian universities, ahead of others. The affirmation path is not only a proof of commitment towards education for all but also a form of equality of all which is acknowledging human rights.

In terms of INDOEDUC4ALL project, since the program is rolling, one important point to set is the sustainability of the project [9]. From the work package, partner universities are supported to establish the network in regional and national level. The aim is to replicate the success story of the establishment of disability support center as well as enhancement of the one which is already established. The network is a crucial point of attention since the inclusive can only be done when all the element in society take action towards supporting people with disabilities.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to the INDOEDUC4ALL project lead by Alicante University and the consortium universities under the project, for both from European countries as well as the Indonesian partners. Also, the expression of gratitude surely goes to Erasmus+ for supporting this project.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 1948. [Online]. Available: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.
- [2] D. G. Romi, "CPNS difabel yang kelulusannya dibatalkan 'Saya mampu bersaing dengan peserta umum'." [Online]. Available: <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-49150443>.
- [3] D. Ary, L. C. Jacobs, C. K. S. Irvine, and D. Walker, *Introduction to research in education*. Cengage Learning, 2018.
- [4] M. Ortlipp, "Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process," *Qual. Rep.*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 695–705, 2008.
- [5] *Republic of Indonesia Decree no. 08/2016 on People with Dissability*. 2016.
- [6] A. Supena, M. Yusuf, Budiyo, N. Azizah, and R. R. T, *Panduan Layanan Mahasiswa Disabilitas di Perguruan Tinggi*. Teknologi dan Perguruan Tinggi. Direktorat Jenderal Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan. Direktorat Pembelajaran, 2017.
- [7] Budiyo, K. Sheehy, H. Kaye, and K. Rofiaha, "Indonesian

- Educators' beliefs about teaching children with autism," *Athens J. Educ.*, 2019.
- [8] W. Primastika, "Penyandang Disabilitas Masih Sulit Mengakses Perguruan Tinggi." 2019.
- [9] *INDOEDUC4ALL project document*. INDOEDUC4ALL project document, 2016.