



## Competence of Shadow Teacher in Building Confidence and Life Skills of Students with Special Needs

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to describe the competencies of shadow teachers in developing the confidence and life skills of children with special needs at elementary school. The research method used is a qualitative descriptive research method with a phenomenological type. Data is collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The study results show that shadow teachers have four competencies in building confidence and life skills. 1) Professional competence. Teachers improve professional competence by participating in training related to inclusion education online and offline; 2) Pedagogical competence. Teachers make individual learning programs based on the results of assessments carried out by psychologists, learning using a pullout system, children with special needs do the same learning as regular children, teachers always include children with special needs in school activities, three and social competence. Teachers include social relations with parents, social relations with experts (pediatricians and psychologists), social relations with children with special needs, social relations with regular children, and social relations between teachers; 4 and personal competence. The personal competencies of shadow teachers include being a special assistant teacher as a calling, patient and diligent, sincere, empathetic, fair, a spirit of learning, and having a high sense of affection.*

**Keywords:** *Confident; Life Skills; Shadow Teacher; Teacher Competence; Elementary Education.*

**Abstrak:** *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kompetensi shadow teacher dalam mengembangkan kepercayaan diri dan keterampilan hidup anak berkebutuhan khusus di sekolah dasar. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan jenis fenomenologi. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa shadow teacher memiliki empat kompetensi dalam membangun kepercayaan diri dan kecakapan hidup. 1) Kompetensi profesional. Guru meningkatkan kompetensi profesional dengan mengikuti pelatihan terkait pendidikan inklusi secara online dan offline; 2) Kompetensi pedagogik. Guru membuat program pembelajaran individual berdasarkan hasil asesmen yang dilakukan oleh psikolog, pembelajaran menggunakan sistem cabut, anak berkebutuhan khusus melakukan pembelajaran yang sama dengan anak reguler, guru selalu mengikutsertakan anak berkebutuhan khusus dalam kegiatan*

sekolah; 3) *Kompetensi sosial*. Guru meliputi hubungan sosial dengan orang tua, hubungan sosial dengan tenaga ahli (dokter anak dan psikolog), hubungan sosial dengan anak berkebutuhan khusus, hubungan sosial dengan anak reguler, dan hubungan sosial antar guru; keempat, *kompetensi personal*. Kompetensi pribadi guru pendamping khusus meliputi menjadi guru pendamping khusus merupakan panggilan jiwa, sabar dan tekun, ikhlas, berempati, adil, semangat belajar, dan memiliki rasa kasih sayang yang tinggi.

**Kata Kunci:** *Percaya Diri; Kecakapan Hidup; Shadow Teacher; Kompetensi Guru; Pendidikan Dasar.*

## Introduction

Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009 concerning inductive education requires every school to have at least one shadow teacher. However, the reality is that Indonesia has a deficit of shadow teachers. The appeal for implementing inclusive education has not been balanced with a massive increase in the competence of shadow teachers (Rahmad et al., 2024). Shadow teachers are crucial in accompanying children with special needs (Alshaikhi & Khasawneh, 2024). With an exceptional educational background, shadow teachers can teach children how to survive and develop their potential. Confidence and life skills must be possessed by every child, especially children with special needs. So that they are not insecure, can live independently without being dependent on others, and can survive (Andreas & Muqowim, 2020; Satriyawan & Ichsan, 2020).

Physical differences experienced by children with special needs caused by obstacles in growth or development are one of the factors that cause low self-esteem (Fithriyana, 2019). Furthermore, people who are inferior or lack self-confidence will have difficulty developing their potential. Therefore, self-confidence is important for maintaining one's life and actualizing oneself in society.

In addition to providing self-confidence, children who experience developmental disabilities need to be trained in life skills early. Life skills are an individual's ability to defend life. Self-care is the most straightforward yet essential life skill (Sa'odah & Supriatna, 2021). Every child, especially children with special needs, must be trained and habituated from an early age to be able to take care of themselves. The goal is to prevent children from becoming entirely dependent on others (Arif et al., 2025).

Several previous studies on special assistant teachers and other research results Nurhakim & Furnamasari (2023); Semerikov & Striuk, (2024) show that inclusive education will be successful if the school and the family cooperate. Despite educators' patience and diligence, the absence of family support often disrupts the child's learning process. The research by Mahardika et al. (2022) shows that teachers' efforts in fostering the confidence of children with special needs are by giving praise and attention. This praise and attention fulfills the child's fundamental right to appreciation. Rosita and Suherman, (2020) added that the competence of special assistant teachers can be developed with a collaborative teaching system. The forms of teaching collaboration include team teaching, collaborative consultation, intervention teams, and multidisciplinary student service delivery teams (Karakose et al., 2023; Papadakis et al., 2023).

Studies on inclusive education are not new. Unfortunately, schools based on the inclusion model are still minimal. The limited number of professionals in the inclusion field is also why institutions do not implement inclusion education. The parental factor is also an obstacle that cannot accept the presence of children with special needs in the community (Reefani, 2013; Windarsih et al., 2017). Even

institutions that have implemented inclusive education still often face problems. The emergence of this problem is due to many factors, such as a lack of planning and direction of the vision and mission (Lestarinigrum, 2017; Purnama et al., 2017). Other problems include the lack of accompanying teachers, lack of competence of shadow teachers, negative stigma, accessibility barriers, policies that have not been entirely partisan, and limited accessibility of learning resources and funds (Ansari et al., 2021; Sari & Hendriani, 2021).

MI Salafiyah Kebarongan is an inclusion-based school in Kemranjen, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Since its establishment, MI Salafiyah Kebarongan has embraced special needs children. The emergence of their concern for children with disabilities is because they do not get the same treatment and rights as children in general. With this determination, MI Salafiyah Kebarongan School continues to be committed to organizing inclusive education. Although initially realizing inclusive education must be full of struggles, starting from the limitations of infrastructure facilities and the lack of facilities with a strong spirit, MI Salafiyah Kebarongan slowly has a way to improve the curriculum, provide facilities according to the needs of children, and develop the competence of shadow teachers.

In addition to the information provided by the school above, the researcher was also strengthened by the fact that the researcher chose this MI because there are two shadow teachers. Not only that, but every teacher is also active in improving knowledge and skills through training, both independently, in collaboration with observers of inclusion institutions, and, of course, those organized by the government.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif NU Ciberem, Banyumas Regency, is the second research location chosen by the researcher. The choice of this location is because the school has implemented inclusion education. The implementation of this inclusive education can be proven through the school's vision, namely "Becoming a Superior Inclusive Madrasah with Character, Independence, and Moral Character in 2040". Then, one of the missions of this school is to "create a madrasah that is friendly and child-friendly."

MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem has two shadow teachers. Shadow teachers are responsible for implementing self-development programs for all children with special needs. The self-development program is an exercise and habituation for children with special needs to take care of themselves, also known as life skills.

Based on the research above, this paper is considered relevant and can fill in the blank space for the previous writing. The author is trying to uncover the competence of shadow teachers in building the confidence and life skills of children with special needs at MI Salafiyah Kebarongan and MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem Banyumas. Then, the author analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of each so that they can be used as joint evaluation material in the development of the competence of shadow teachers. In turn, schools can accept children with special needs by the government's program to provide education well.

## **Method**

This type of research is qualitative research. Qualitative research describes and analyzes phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals and groups (Sukmadinata, 2007). The type of qualitative methodology used is phenomenology. This qualitative method is selected because the data obtained is in-depth. Researchers can capture all the phenomena in this school by maximizing all five senses. Data were collected from the location where the study

was conducted. The research location is MI Ma'arif Salafiyah Kebarongan and MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem Sumbang, Banyumas Regency. The subjects used in this study include two heads of the madrasah, four shadow teachers, and six students.

The data collection used in this study is interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews used in this study are semi-structured, where the researcher freely provides questions related to the interests of this research according to the conditions of the informants. The observation carried out was non-participatory observation. Documentation is also important to support this research. The most important part that should not be forgotten in a study is analyzing the data that has been collected.

This research was analyzed using theory [Milles & Huberman, \(1993\)](#). The analysis begins with data collection using observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Second, the data that has been collected is then reduced. Researchers filter data that are the focus of the research. Third, the researcher presented the data. The data is presented by juxtaposing previous theories so that conclusions are reached. Then, the data was tested using source triangulation and triangulation techniques. Source triangulation means comparing data from different sources with the same technique, while triangulation techniques have the same results but use different techniques ([Sugiyono, 2018](#)). This triangulation technique is implemented in analysis activities. The researcher compared the observation results with the interview results obtained and then compared them with the documentation data.

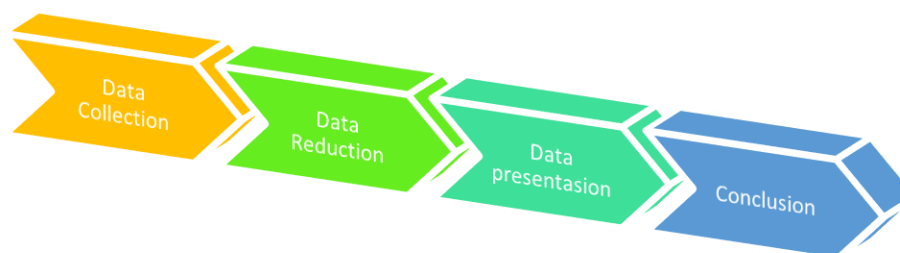


Figure 1. Pictures of the Stages of Research Activities

## Result and Discussion

### Professional Competence of Shadow Teachers in Building Confidence and Life Skills of Children with Special Needs

Professional competencies for shadow teachers are special education graduates (*Pendidikan Luar Biasa*). An interview with the head of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem shows that all educators at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem do not come from graduates of extraordinary education ([Darsiti](#), personal interview, July 1, 2024). A special assistant teacher reinforces this by noting that he holds a degree in Islamic Education Management rather than Special Education ([Fatih](#), personal interview, July 4, 2024). MI Salafiyah Kebarongan has two shadow teachers with backgrounds other than extraordinary education ([Mumun](#), personal interview, July 8, 2024). [Halidjah & Asrori \(2025\)](#) stated that the lack of qualifications of special assistant teachers is a challenge often encountered in the implementation of inclusive education. [Sitanggung et al. \(2025\)](#) also added that the mismatch in the qualifications of special assistant teachers causes the workload to become heavier.

"Our obstacles and hassles are because we do not have a tutor who is qualified to be a special tutor. So the teachers here are only equipped with training. If



there are new teachers, they will be accompanied by senior teachers" (Siti F., personal interview, August 9, 2024).

The Head of MI, Salafiyah Kebarongan, stated that the current shadow teacher does not have a special assistant teacher qualification. So that senior teachers can accompany them first. Although no teachers from the Department of Extraordinary Education, MI Salafiyah Kebarongan assigned Devi and Widi as shadow teachers. The limitations of academic qualifications possessed by special assistant teachers in inclusion schools with no exceptional educational background can affect the arrangement of individual learning programs. Limitations: There is a need for a learning community for shadow teachers. So that shadow teachers across agencies can share experiences and effective learning strategies. In addition, the school can hold mentoring sessions with experts regularly. To support shadow teachers in developing better-individualized learning programs.

Professional competence can also be improved through training. Some of the training attended by educators at MI Ciberem include training organized by Ma'arif in collaboration with UNICEF, training organized by Central Java province, training in Bogor, training in West Nusa Tenggara (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). The results of interviews with MI Salafiyah Kebarongan class teachers also show that there used to be training from Australia. Providing opportunities for teachers to participate in training aims to improve their competence so that curriculum implementation is maximized (Nasarudin, 2018). The existence of training organized by international institutions is an excellent collaboration. However, the challenge faced is the lack of sustainability of this program. So now there are no more similar training courses. In addition, the challenge faced by inclusion schools in improving the competence of special assistant teachers is that financing is still limited for special training and further study for shadow teachers.

To become an inclusive school, it must include all school residents. The first thing MI Ciberem does is to participate in inclusion training for all teachers (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). MI Salafiyah Kebarongan also did the same thing, stating that all teachers participated in inclusion training (Mumun, personal interview, July 8, 2024). In this case, schools play an important role in managing an inclusive climate in schools. By empowering all school residents, an inclusive climate will be successfully realized. Nwoko et al. (2024) stated that the principal's leadership greatly influences teacher welfare. Effective leaders can create a positive environment so that job satisfaction can increase.

Teachers at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem took turns participating in inclusion education training. If the training is in a more specialized field, the head of MI will delegate to teachers. As stated by the Head of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem below:

"Sometimes the assigned teacher's determination looks at the training's theme. For example, there is a training to read the Quran for children with special needs organized by UIN Saizu Purwokerto, assigned to Mr. Amin as a teacher of Arabic and Quran Hadith" (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024).

Likewise, when there is training in making individual education programs (PPI), the head of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem delegated it to Fatih as a special assistant teacher at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem. Delegation is due to limited participants, and training time is often carried out on active school days. So it is not effective if all teachers take part in the training. However, teachers who receive orders to take part in training must transmit them to other teachers.

In addition to offline training, MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem teachers also participated in online training (Fatih, personal interview, July 4, 2024). The Head of MI, Salafiyah

Kebarongan, sent all his teachers to take part in training on the PINTAR application (Siti F., personal interview, August 9, 2024). The online training that was recently followed was the Inclusion Education training organized by the Ministry of Religion through the Ministry of Religion's PINTAR application. This training is elementary to follow. Teachers only register in the Ministry of Religion's PINTAR application and choose training to improve the required competencies. Different types of training are also held every month. Teachers can participate for free and receive a certificate after the training. Hoesny & Darmayanti, (2021) Also stated that one way to improve the professional competence of teachers is to participate in professional development both offline and online. Lin et al. (2023) add that teacher training utilizing technology and online platforms is relevant today.

The last effort to improve the professional competence of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem teachers is training for teachers. This activity is held at least once a year. The resource persons for this activity are hospital psychologists or doctors (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). Teachers can consult with resource persons regarding handling children with special needs and obstacles encountered when treating children. Consistent with adult learning principles, teachers should actively participate in professional communities supporting collaboration and development (Ong et al., 2020).

From the explanation of professional competence above, it can be understood that the absence of graduates of special schools who become special assistant teachers does not prevent an educational institution from continuing to organize inclusive education. Because in reality, mastery of knowledge and skills is not only obtained in lectures, but can also be obtained through training, courses, seminars, and so on.

### **Pedagogic Competence of Shadow Teachers in Building Confidence and Life Skills of Children with Special Needs**

The teachers at MI Maarif NU Ciberem and MI Salafiyah Kebarongan were understood by identifying the assessment results from psychologists. Classroom teachers and special assistant teachers at MI Ciberem get directions from the results of the doctor's diagnosis as the basis for arranging learning for children (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). Fatih reinforced this by stating that the Individual Learning Program concerns the doctor's initial assessment (Fatih, personal interview, July 4, 2024). The opinion of Aristya and Rini (2024) stated that one of the roles of special assistant teachers in inclusive schools is to design individual learning programs. The documentation results also show that shadow teacher MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem Sumbang makes individual learning programs (PPI) for children with special needs. As stated in Ministerial Regulation no. 32 of 2023 concerning national education standards, the first step to understanding students is to know the level of child development and obstacles. The study results show that the method carried out by MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem is appropriate. A psychologist then examines children diagnosed with special needs to ascertain the obstacles suffered and appropriate treatment suggestions.

As for MI Salafiyah Kebarongan, children with special needs who want to register at MI Salafiyah Kebarongan must bring the results of an assessment from a psychologist. Moreover, parents have also been assessed by a psychologist and done routine therapy. Special assistant teachers use the assessment results brought by parents as a reference in providing learning to children (Siti F., personal interview, August 9, 2024). Isnaeni added that child therapy usually begins at the beginning of learning (Isnaeni W., personal interview, August 10, 2024). So that teachers can adjust learning to the needs of children. Friend, (2018) explained that special

assistant teachers must be able to adapt teaching methods and teaching materials according to the learning needs of students.

Understanding students is also done by understanding each student's background. The statement concerning National Education Standards is outlined in [Ministerial Regulation No. 32 of 2023](#). Based on the interview results with the head of MI Ciberem, it was stated that the teacher conducted an initial interview with the student's guardian to find out the family background ([Darsiti](#), personal interview, July 1, 2024). In addition, teachers also make home visits to get to know the students' daily lives more closely. Home visits serve the dual purpose of understanding students' backgrounds and fostering greater confidence in them ([Karniyanti et al., 2019](#)).

In contrast to MI Salafiyah Kebarongan, Isnaeni, as a shadow teacher, stated that to foster the confidence of children with special needs, teachers accompany children intensely at the beginning of school. Then, the teacher introduces the child's surrounding environment and social environment. Usually, the child will want to join his friends for around 2-3 weeks ([Isnaeni W.](#), personal interview, August 10, 2024). [Naurotuzzahiyahu et al. \(2024\)](#) also stated that teachers have an important role in shaping the self-confidence of children with special needs. Teachers can provide intensive guidance to children. This aims to make children adapt more quickly to their new environment.

The learning system at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem uses a pullout system. That is, children participate in learning together in class. After that, children with special needs participate in unique learning in a separate room ([Darsiti](#), personal interview, July 1, 2024). The pull out learning system has been proven to optimize the learning skills of children with special needs ([Rohman & Firdhausyah, 2024](#)). In addition to learning skills, the use of this system can also increase the interest in learning of children with special needs ([Mardini, 2016](#)). The learning climate in inclusive schools must be created in a conducive and effective manner. The aim is to enable teachers to provide more individualized attention and support to each child with special needs. [Fatih](#), as a shadow teacher, also confirmed this:

"Usually I group them first. Then I only did learning outside the classroom 3 times a week" ([Fatih](#), personal interview, July 4, 2024).

The pullout learning system has several advantages, including providing opportunities for children with special needs to get more focused learning. In addition, teachers can also use more specific methods according to the needs of each child. However, this learning system has a drawback: the risk of creating a negative stigma from classmates. Children with special needs can feel isolated because they often learn outside the classroom. Schools should anticipate this by adopting a hybrid inclusion model, ensuring that students with special needs stay in regular classes and benefit from extra learning outside the classroom.

Meanwhile, at MI Salafiyah Kebarongan, shadow teachers are assigned to attend classes for children with special needs. When children move up in class, children with special needs also follow. The aim is to make continuing the children's learning program easier. During the teaching and learning process, children learn together in the classroom. When encountering difficulties, children will be separated to study in special classes. The observation results also showed shadow teachers and children learning in front of the 3rd-grade classroom. According to the shadow teacher's presentation, there is a special room; it is just that children want to learn outdoors. This data was obtained through the results of observations made by researchers. In their research, ([Ferri et al., 2023](#)) emphasized the importance of reducing the

student-teacher ratio in inclusive classes. Through this approach, teachers are expected to provide more individual care and assistance to children with special needs.

Learning for children with special needs is not equated with normal children and is tailored based on student barriers and needs. The ability of teachers to design and implement differentiated instructions to meet the learning needs of students is included in the pedagogical competence of special assistant teachers. Teachers use this ability to assess continuously and adjust teaching strategies based on student progress (Tomlinson, 2014). The results of an interview with Mumun, a teacher of MI Salafiyah Kebarongan class:

"Yes, learning as usual by combining regular and special children. However, the results differ from those of regular children and crew members. Because in principle, they are willing to learn, it is already an appreciation" (Mumun, personal interview, July 8, 2024).

Children with special needs learn together with normal children. The activities they do are also the same. It is just that the assessment standards are different from those of normal children. As Mrs. Fatimah says:

"Children with special needs participating in sports, he wants to wear his tracksuit, it is an assessment for him, do not be demanded more like other regular children because his ability is like that. I remind parents that children with special needs do not have to conform to the same standards as typical students. As long as they do their best and continue to grow, they deserve the same recognition and acceptance" (Siti F., personal interview, August 9, 2024).

Mrs. Fatimah's presentation shows that the assessment standards for children with special needs differ from those of regular children. In addition, the school also provides parents with an understanding of not setting too high targets for their children. Accordance is by Idrus, (2019), who explained that the purpose of the evaluation activity was to determine student development progress. So that the success standards of children with special needs are adjusted to each level of their development and the obstacles they suffer. Differentiating different assessment standards for children with special needs is a reasonable effort. However, there needs to be a more structured evaluation system to objectively measure the development of skills of children with special needs.

The next indicator of pedagogical competence is to develop the potential of students. According to the data from the research results, teachers always include children with special needs in every activity. Based on the results of an interview with Mumun as a class teacher, it was stated that children with special needs at MI Salafiyah Kebarongan are always involved in school activities (Mumun, personal interview, July 8, 2024). Mrs. Fatimah, the Head of MI Salafiyah Kebarongan, also stated the same thing, for example, during extra scout activities. Children with special needs are also involved with regular children (Siti F., personal interview, August 9, 2024). Likewise, what was done at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem, children with special needs also performed creative dances during the Ministry of Religion's Gebyar on May 20, 2024. This is in accordance with the opinion Anggriana & Trisnani (2016) which states that it is said to be inclusive education if the learning process involves all students without exception. Zulfitriah & Asti (2023) adding that involving students with special needs in every learning activity is the key to the success of inclusive education.

The presentation of the data analysis above can be concluded that the pedagogical competence of special assistant teachers is the main key in organizing inclusive



education. With good learning planning based on the needs of each student, teachers can carry out holistic learning for both regular children and children with special needs.

### **Personal Competence of Shadow Teachers in Building Confidence and Life Skills of Children with Special Needs**

Personal competence is a teacher's personality so that it can be an example for students. The Head of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem stated that making MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem an inclusive MI is a call of the heart. This is motivated by the fact that some parents complain that they find it difficult to find schools for their children with disabilities (Darsiti, personal interview, 1 July 2024). Likewise at MI Salafiyah Kebarongan, when recruiting new teachers, the Head of MI conveyed the condition of the school and the students to be taught. Teachers who register also accept with open arms (Siti F., personal interview, 9 August 2024).

Special assistant teachers provide life skills learning to children with special needs patiently and diligently (Darsiti, personal interview, 1 July 2024). Developing life skills in children with special needs so that children can carry out their social functions independently (BM & Sakina, 2021). The forms of life skills learning that are used by students at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem include wearing their own clothes, buttoning their own clothes, and wearing their own bags. These self-care skills aim to enable children to live independently and not depend on others.

“If the important thing is that the child wants to, usually the moods” (Isnaeni W., personal interview, 10 August 2024).

Mrs. Widi said that when students just enter school, life skills stimulation activities are given when the child wants to. Because students with special needs are often emotionally unstable. So, when the child wants to, the teacher teaches them to wear their own clothes, button their clothes, take off their clothes, put on their own shoes, and eat by themselves.

The implementation of inclusion education at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem is based on a sense of sincerity. Considering the background of the economic condition of disability's parents from the middle to lower class. So that the school does not set infaq for parents. Soevian et al. (2024) stated that one of the supporting factors for the implementation of inclusive education is the commitment of inclusive education institutions. The commitment of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem is to provide the best education for all children regardless of socio-economic background, so that this institution can implement inclusive education well.

Inclusive school teachers must have a sense of empathy. As well as teaching regular children to empathize with their friends with special needs. There is a unique way done at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem in accustoming children to empathy, namely by yelling, “I... You... We....Same...”. These chants were cheered at the beginning of learning. Building a relationship that respects each other is the key to increasing the confidence of children with special needs (Rieser, 2013). These invitations to empathize are affective in building social understanding between students. However, this approach may be expanded with other methods. Other methods that can be used are to use the story method and the role-playing method.

Organizing inclusive education does not mean only focusing attention on children with special needs. But also in all children. The same is true for teachers at MI Ma'arif Ciberem. Teachers pay attention to children fairly and equally regardless of their socioeconomic status and circumstances (Darsiti, personal interview, 1 July 2024).

Passion for learning. One form of learning enthusiasm carried out by MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem teachers is to visit homes to learn from students' guardians. The Head of MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem stated that teachers came to visit to learn the children's daily language (Darsiti, personal interview, 1 July 2024). The teachers' enthusiasm for learning is also reflected in their enthusiasm for participating in training both online and offline. This home visit activity, apart from making it easier for teachers to get to know students better, also aims to increase public awareness of the importance of education for children with special needs (Herman & Ramdhani, 2022).

The last indicator of the personal competence of shadow teachers is to have a sense of affection. Bringing out a confident attitude in children with special needs is by giving affection to children. Giving affection can give the impression that he is accepted in the environment. This is in accordance with the statement of Mumun as a 1st grade teacher of MI Salafiyah Kebarongan who stated that the main key to dealing with children with special needs is affection. Because the child will feel that the teacher loves him or not (Mumun, personal interview, 8 July 2024). Mrs. Fatimah added that every human being wants to feel loved and humanized (Siti F., personal interview, 9 August 2024). Teachers who are trained and able to demonstrate positive attitudes can create an inclusive climate in everyday life (Losberg et al., 2024).

A special assistant teacher must have personal competence. This is because educating children with special needs does not only teach knowledge and skills. But also forms an inner bond between educators and students. Educators who have good morals will radiate positive energy for students. So that during the learning process students will feel happy and comfortable. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that special assistant teachers must have personal competence which includes self-efficacy, the intention to educate is a calling of the heart, having empathy and compassion. By having this competence, teachers can provide optimal education and lighten the burden of teaching teachers.

### **Social Competence of Shadow Teachers in Building Confidence and Life Skills of Children with Special Needs**

Social competence is the ability of teachers to interact with children with special needs, regular children, parents, and experts. A positive social environment positively influences the confidence of children with special needs (Pratiwi & Mangunsong, 2020). MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem built social relationships; first, social relationships with parents. The relationship with the first parent was established when the teacher interviewed the child's condition. Not infrequently, parents immediately convey their child's condition when registering for school. After the teacher gets the data on children with special needs, parents are included in a special WA group for parents of children with special needs. The aim is to facilitate the coordination of child examinations by holding parent meetings (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024).

Activities with parents are also carried out in the form of parenting. This activity aims to equalize the perception and treatment given to children (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). MI Salafiyah Kebarongan routinely gathers the disabled parents before learning for the new school year and distributing report cards. This activity aims to reinforce to parents (Siti F., personal interview, August 9, 2024). Shadow's teacher also said that the one who did the parenting was the Head of school (Isnaeni W., personal interview, August 10, 2024). Strong cooperation between teachers and parents is crucial for delivering the proper treatment and guidance to children. Pudyastuti (2023) stated that involving parents in providing support to children with special needs can increase concern and foster a sense of acceptance towards children with special needs.

Parents are also given education about learning life skills for children with special needs. Mrs. Isnaen said that when the parents picked them up, she explained the child's activities to the parents of the students that day. Parents do not infrequently ask the teacher directly (Isnaeni, personal interview, August 10, 2024). Principles that must be held in habituating life skills include patience in training, diligence, and not feeling sorry for children. BM & Sakina (2021) stated that the habituation method is an effective way to train life skills in children with special needs. This is because by repeating, children will remember more. The school conducts home visits to monitor the treatment carried out by parents while at home. Routinely, at least 2 times in one semester, MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem makes home visits. This activity aims to monitor the treatment done by parents when at home. It is not uncommon to find parents who are inconsistent in carrying out treatment for their children. Parental intervention is often evident when they assist their children out of sympathy. For this reason, the school consistently reminds them that the primary objective is to educate and nurture the child's independence.

The classroom teacher makes a special visit to learn the child's everyday language. A unique custom at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem is enforced for classroom teachers. Classroom teachers with deaf or speech-impaired children are assigned to learn the child's everyday language to the family. The aim is to facilitate communication between teachers and students while at school. This program was also well received by the family. So that there is a reciprocal relationship. Good cooperation between schools and parents can establish open communication to provide holistic support to children with special needs (Kadriu et al., 2024).

The approach taken by schools is perfect to build parental involvement in children's education. However, the research results revealed that some parents are still inconsistent in training their children's independence. An example can be seen in parents who often provide excessive assistance out of pity for their children. Therefore, schools need to develop community-based parenting programs. Parents of children with special needs can share experiences and strategies when accompanying their children. In addition, it is necessary to implement a mentoring and monitoring system regularly to help guide new parents in facing challenges in educating children with special needs.

Second, social relations with experts. At the beginning of every new school year, there is an examination conducted by a psychologist for children with special needs. Children with signs of special needs are then taken to the Banyumas Regional General Hospital (RSUD) (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). Cooperation with experts, in addition to aiming to determine the type of needs of children, teachers can also know the proper method for children (Smith, 2006). Cooperation with psychologists at the beginning of the new school year to conduct initial assessments is very important. However, without a structured follow-up evaluation, its effectiveness can be reduced. Therefore, regular monitoring by experts is needed.

Third, social relationships with regular children. Teachers give children the understanding that they have friends with special needs.

"The teacher gives understanding to regular children such as "There are friends of yours who are in this condition; you must understand their limitations, and you must also help them with their shortcomings" (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024).

Providing understanding to children does not mean only privileging children with special needs. However, it aims to build a sense of empathy in regular children. Children's empathy can be seen, for example, during recess. It can be seen that

children offer their disabled friends what snacks they want. Hnoievska et al. (2022) state that teachers are responsible for student learning outcomes and foster tolerance and compassionate attitudes between fellow students. Garzón Díaz & Goodley (2021) add that empathy between students can also be built through stories. This activity can help students understand the concept of diversity.

Fourth, social relations between teachers. The relationship between teachers at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem is manifested through mutual encouragement. Educating is difficult if it is not based on patience and sincerity, especially educating children with special needs. Therefore, the teachers at MI Ma'arif NU Ciberem encourage each other. The head of MI often motivates who else will educate them if not us (Darsiti, personal interview, July 1, 2024). Kolaborasi antar pendidik sangat dibutuhkan untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus (Fajra et al., 2020).

Social relations between teachers are also between internal teachers of the school and the community of shadow teachers throughout Central Java. Evidence can be found in Fatih's statement about a special WhatsApp group for shadow teachers called "*Guru Pendamping Khusus Ma'arif Jawa Tengah.*" (Fatih, personal interview, July 4, 2024). Munawir et al. (2023) states that professional organizations that educators join can develop and improve the abilities of educators. This aims to make educators more competent and expert in their fields.

The above data exposure can be understood that being a special assistant teacher must have the ability to communicate and interact well. This social competence is needed not only in interacting with students with special needs, but also with regular students, guardians, fellow educators, and the surrounding community. Because inclusive education will run optimally if the school, family, and community synergize with each other.

## Conclusion

This study aims to describe the competence of special assistant teachers in developing the life skills and independence of children with special needs in inclusion schools at the elementary school level. The study results show that special assistant teachers must have four competencies. The competencies that shadow teachers must possess in building the confidence and life skills of children with special needs include professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competence. The professional competence possessed by shadow teachers at MI Ma'arif Ciberem and MI Salafiyah Kebarongan is to participate in training related to inclusion education both online and offline. The pedagogical competence of shadow teachers at MI Ma'arif Ciberem and MI Salafiyah Kebarongan includes creating individual learning programs based on the results of assessments carried out by psychologists, learning using a pullout system, children with special needs do the same learning as regular children, teachers always include children with special needs in school activities. The personal competencies of shadow teachers at MI Ma'arif Ciberem and MI Salafiyah Kebarongan include undergoing the profession of special assistant teachers as a call to the heart, patient and diligent, sincere, empathetic, fair spirit of learning, having a high sense of affection. The social competence of shadow teachers at MI Ma'arif Ciberem and MI Salafiyah Kebarongan includes social relations with parents, social relations with experts (pediatricians and psychologists), social relations with children with special needs, social relations with regular children, social relations between teachers. The implications of this research are improving the quality and professional development of special assistant teachers, designing a more structured individual learning



program, and strengthening the awareness and understanding of the surrounding community regarding inclusive education.

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