

LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS
LABELLED AS LEARNING DISABLED IN
INDONESIAN PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
at the University of Canterbury

by Costrie Ganes Widayanti

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Dedications

To my late father and to my mother

for endless prayer, trust, and support throughout my journey

To learning-disabled children

whose voices are voiceless and presence seem invisible

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application in another degree of this or any other university or other institution.

List of Conference Presentations Arising from this Thesis

Widayanti, C.G., McMenamin, T., & Fletcher, J. (2019, 17–20 November). *Being positioned as different: Lessons learned from students labelled as learning disabled experiencing barriers to recognition and acceptance in Indonesian schools*. Paper presented at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE) Conference, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.

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Abstract

This ethnographic case study research is concerned with learning disabilities in Indonesia. My interest is in understanding how a particular group of students are defined by teachers and how teachers' perceptions of students can influence students' learning in daily classroom life. I draw on social constructionism as a framework to understand how learning disabilities are socially, culturally, and politically constructed.

This thesis comes from and has been a journey of questioning, comparing and contrasting the reality in a complex and pluralistic society like Indonesia. The study involves four teachers and eight students (four students labelled as learning disabled and four peers). Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were used to collect the data. The interviews with the students were more informal than those with the teachers. Fifteen interviews were conducted with teachers and eight with students. The interviews ranged in length from 15 to 60 minutes. The participant observations took place both inside and outside the classroom, including break-time.

The findings in this study challenge the practice of deficit constructions of learning disabilities. Discoveries about how students labelled as learning

disabled are viewed and how such views are reflected in teaching and learning cannot be separated from how curriculum and education policies are enacted in teachers' practices. In this thesis I argue that the view of ability that is narrowly understood as an innate and a fixed condition should be rejected to make way for new understandings of how schooling contributes to producing and maintaining failure and exclusion.

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Abbreviations

BP-Diksus	Balai Pengembangan dan Pendidikan Khusus (Development and Special Education Agency)
BPS	Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistical Centre Bureau)
BPS	Biopsychosocial approach
EFA	Education for All
EI	Early intervention
ERHEC	Education Research Human Ethics Committee
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
INPRES	Instruksi Presiden (Presidential Instruction)
IQ	Intelligence quotient
KKM	Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (English: the minimum mastery criteria)
K-13	Kurikulum 2013 (2013 Curriculum)
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MORA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
NJCLD	National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAUD	Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (Early Childhood Education)

SD	Sekolah Dasar (primary school)
SEBD	Social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties
SMA	Sekolah Menengah Atas (senior secondary school)
SMP	Sekolah Menengah Pertama (junior secondary school)
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Glossary

The thesis was conducted in Indonesia and involved conversations with individuals in two schools where local and national languages are integral in the teachers' and students' daily lives. Therefore, to understand the local culture, it is important to understand the language. To assist the reader, I include here the words that were relevant to the context of my study.

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika	Indonesian motto that upholds the diversity that makes up Indonesia. It means unity in diversity.
Ibu	Formal expression for mature adult; Mrs
Kesulitan belajar	Learning disabilities
Ketidakmampuan belajar/ kesulitan	Inability to learn
Kompetensi dasar	Basic competence
Kompetensi inti	Core competence
<i>Pekok</i>	A word from a local language that derogatively describes a person who is less able
Pembiasaan	Habituation
Sekolah luar biasa	Special school

Standar kompetensi lulusan	Basic and secondary competence
pendidikan dasar dan menengah	standard
Ujian nasional	National examination

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis explores teachers' and students' perceptions of students labelled as learning disabled in Indonesian primary schools. It focuses on inclusion, participation, and learning, which are central to issues of diversity and social justice. Using the Indonesian public-school context, the thesis explores how those issues are addressed under the implementation of an inclusive education policy in Indonesia. This chapter sets out the scope and focus of the thesis. Discussion of the Indonesian context of this study and how the Indonesian education system deals with learning disabilities and inclusive education follows. The chapter also includes discussion of learning disabilities as socially constructed concepts, and posits that construction of learning disabilities may influence not only students labelled as learning disabled' learning and participation but also how teachers treat students labelled as learning disabled.

1.1. Understanding the context

Indonesia participated in the ratification of international legal documents that entitle all children access to education, and in doing so supported the development of inclusive education in Indonesia (Indonesian Government,

2011; Poernomo, 2016). Nationally, implementation of inclusive education is grounded in philosophical, judicial, pedagogical, and empirical bases. The national motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” or “Unity in Diversity” is rooted in the life of Indonesian society. It acknowledges diversity as a valuable component that builds the nation (Ministry of National Education, 2010). Article 31 Section 1 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that “Each citizen has the right to an education” (Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945), guarantees the basic right of each individual to receive an education. Several national legal guidelines have also been issued with the aim of supporting students with disabilities obtain education in regular and special schools (Sunardi, Maryadi, & Sugini, 2014). These include Law No. 8 (2016) on Persons with Disabilities (Indonesian Government, 2016), Law No. 35 (2014) on the Protection of Children (Indonesian Government, 2014), Law 20 (2003) on the National Education System (Indonesian Government, 2003), and Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 70 (2009) on Inclusive Education (Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2009). This regulation states that “Inclusive education is a system of education that provides opportunities for all learners who have disabilities and have the potential of intelligence and/or special talents to follow education or learning in an educational environment together with

learners in general” (Ediyanto, Atika, Kawai, & Prabowo, 2017, p. 105; see also Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2009).

This definition positions inclusive education as a means of giving students with disabilities, including students labelled as learning disabled, access to learning in regular schools with non-students with disabilities and peers. The Indonesian government appoints which schools can be assigned to implement inclusive education. A school has to meet predetermined criteria made by the Indonesian government before being assigned as an inclusive school. These criteria include school readiness to carry out inclusive education, availability of students with disabilities and special education teachers (*Guru Pendidikan Khusus/ GPK*), accessible facilities, commitment to compulsory education, and recipient on socialisation about inclusive education (Rosalinda, 2015). According to Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Khusus dan Layanan Khusus (2019), only 11% schools from all education levels qualify to operate as inclusive schools. As a consequence, inclusive schools will receive a grant to support their teaching and learning activities (Sunardi, Yusuf, Gunarhadi, Priyono, & Yeager, 2011). The ways inclusive schools are determined may influence how inclusive education is promoted and supported nationally.

Despite the above legislative efforts, as of 2013, 70 per cent of disabled children in Indonesia did not have access to education, only 116,000 were enrolled in formal schools, and 85,000 were attending special schools (Jakarta Post, 2013). In Indonesia, the number of disabled children enrolled in basic education was 75,000 in 2010, and the number of inclusive schools in Indonesia numbered 2,430 in 2014 (Antara, 2014).

However, simply enrolling and physically placing students labelled as learning disabled in regular schools cannot necessarily guarantee the practice of inclusive education (Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2010). Researchers and commentators have identified several challenges related to implementing inclusive education (see, for example, Adioetomo, Mont, & Irwanto, 2014; Irwanto, Kasim, Fransiska, Lusli, & Siradj, 2010; Jakarta Post, 2013; Kurniawati, Minnaert, Mangunsong, & Ahmed, 2012; Maulipaksi, 2017; Sheehy & Budiyanto, 2014; Sunardi et al., 2011; Sunardi et al., 2014; Sunaryo, 2009; Wibowo & Muin, 2016). In general, this body of work shows that institutional and societal factors have produced barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. These barriers limit the possibility for students labelled as learning disabled and peers to learn from one another. They also reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions such as students labelled as learning disabled are incapable of learning (Adioetomo et al., 2014) and the presence of students labelled as learning

disabled in regular schools has a detrimental effect on other students' learning (Florian, Rouse, & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Challenges to inclusive education as shown by these references are addressed further in Chapter Five, Six, and Seven.

In the next section, I provide a brief account of the Indonesian education system.

1.1.1. The education system in Indonesia

Formal education in Indonesia is characterised by the gradual, hierarchical, and continuous process that covers early education (*Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini/PAUD*) to tertiary education. Basic education comprises six years of primary school and three years of junior high school. Children can then continue to senior secondary school (SMA) for another three years before moving on to higher education (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015; Rosser, 2018). Figure 1 outlines Indonesia's system of education.

Age	School Year	Education Level	Education Delivery			
			Decentralized	Centralized		
Above 22	23	Higher Education		Doctoral (includes General & Islamic, and Vocational, Academic & Professional)		
	22			Master (includes General & Islamic, and Vocational, Academic & Professional)		
	21			Undergraduate (includes General & Islamic, and Vocational & Academic)		
	20					
19	Secondary Education	General Senior Secondary & Vocational Senior Secondary (SMA & SMK)	Islamic General Senior Secondary & Islamic Vocational Senior Secondary (MA & MAK)			
18			Junior Secondary (SMP)	Islamic Junior Secondary (MTs)		
17					Primary (SD)	Islamic Primary (MI)
16						
15	11	Basic Education				
14	10					
13	9					
12	8					
11	7					
10	6					
9	5					
8	4					
7	3					
6	2					
5	1					

Note: The figure presents Indonesia’s education system as set out under National Education System Law No. 20 (2003) (MOEC & ACDP (Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership), 2013, p. 10).

Figure 1. Indonesia’s education system

Formal education is provided through a combination of public and private schools. There are two types of private school – faith-based schools and profit-oriented schools. The faith-based schools are managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), while management of public schools is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). The majority of schools are public (80%); only 20% are private (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015).

The practice of segregation is also validated through separation of regular schools and special schools in the Indonesian education system. Special schools are provided by the Indonesian government in accordance

with Article 15 and Article 32 Section 1 of Law No. 20 (2003) on the National Education System: “Special education is considered as an appropriate education service for students with disabilities who have physical, emotional, social needs, and/or exceptional intelligence and giftedness” (Indonesian Government, 2003, p.11).

In Indonesia, special schools (in Indonesia, called *Sekolah Luar Biasa*/SLB) are classified according to type of disability. For example, SLB A is for the blind, SLB B is for the deaf, SLB C is for intellectual disability, SLB D is for physical disability, SLB E is for emotional and behavioural disability, and SLB G is for multiple disabilities. Special schools are assumed to be better able than regular schools to serve the interests of students with disabilities whose needs demand extra attention and time from teachers (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Wibowo & Muin, 2016). This assumption may potentially highlight practices that legitimise marginalisation of students with disabilities.

The next section discusses the curriculum implemented in the Indonesian education system and how it affects the way students are taught and evaluated.

1.1.2. Curriculum implementation in the Indonesian education system

In Indonesia, the curriculum is understood as a means to control and direct how education is implemented to ensure that the country's education goals are achieved. Article 1 Verse 19 of Law No. 20 (2003) on the National Education System, specifies the curriculum as “a set of plans and settings about the objectives, contents and teaching materials, and methods used as guidelines to organise learning activities to attain certain education goals” (Indonesian Government, 2003, p. 3).

The government's most recent official curriculum was implemented in 2013. Called the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), it aims to achieve the following goals: “... prepare students to be the Indonesian people who have capacity to live as individuals and citizens who are devout, productive, creative, innovative, affective, and able to contribute to society, the nation, and the world” (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013a, p. 4). The 2013 Curriculum emphasises character development, integration of subjects, and thematic-based topics in lesson delivery (Yulianti, 2015). The official curriculum statement offers students a wide range of learning opportunities through which they can exercise the attitudes, knowledge, and skills they need to develop their abilities. Two layers of competencies are introduced: core competencies and basic competencies. Compared to the former curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum requires teachers to assess students'

learning in three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014a; Isnawati & Saukah, 2017; Maba & Mantra, 2018). Some parts of the 2013 Curriculum document seem to suggest that learning should focus on intellectual development and academic excellence. For example, the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum emphasises students' mastery of core competencies to promote their ability to be critical and scientific thinkers.

The top-down administration of the 2013 Curriculum gives power to the national government to control curriculum areas, such as learning objectives, content, and assessment methods (Qoyyimah, 2018). This control has the potential to minimise teachers' efforts to improve or challenge their professional skills, an outcome that tends to de-professionalise Indonesian teachers when implementing the curriculum, as indicated by several studies (see, for example, Bjork, 2004; Isnawati & Saukah, 2017; Qoyyimah, 2018; Suratno, 2014; Yulianti, 2015) that found teachers experience challenges when implementing the curriculum.

The curriculum employs the notion of "competence" to communicate expectations of student learning. Teachers are directed to use criteria that enable them to define, categorise and thus evaluate students' levels of ability. This set of criteria, called the KKM/Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, is

essentially a minimum mastery set of criteria. More specifically, the KKM describe minimum levels of competence that are based on another set of criteria: students' average levels of ability, the complexity of the content subjects, and school facilities. The KKM criteria are quantified from 0 to 100, and the meanings attached to them focus on students' learning capabilities set within the dominant ideology of "ableism" (Bolt, 2005; Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016; Suharto, Kuipers, & Dorsett., 2016). Students with higher levels of ability are expected to achieve in accordance with the higher KKM levels; students with lower levels of ability work within lower levels of KKM. Continuous evaluation leads to students who have difficulty meeting the KKM *standard* criteria specified in Ministry Regulation No. 104 (2014) on Learning Outcomes Assessment are assigned for remedial teaching. Students labelled as learning disabled are likely to be among those referred for remedial teaching (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014b).

Another institutional pressure deals with school reputation through accreditation. Accreditation has been accepted as a standardised process to evaluate and encourage school improvement, as well as to promote school quality using a set of criteria (Haryati, 2014; Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017; OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015; van Zanten, Norcini, Boulet, & Simon, 2008). In Indonesia, school accreditation

gives information about a school's standard in terms of excellence. The level of standard assigned is based on eight assessment criteria (BANSM/Board of National Accrediation for School and Madrasah, 2017; Suprayogi, Valcke, & Godwin, 2017). The significance of this practice is that schools tend to focus on a pursuit of academic excellence in their teaching and learning activities so that they can be labelled as one of "the best" schools.

1.1.3. Learning disabilities in the Indonesian context

In this section, I explain how the concept of learning disabilities is understood within the Indonesian context. Further explanation on learning disabilities can be found in Chapter Two, Section 2.2.

A contradictory finding about the term "learning disabilities" has been found in the Indonesian legislations. For example, learning disability is neither stated nor defined in Law 20 on the National Education System (Indonesian Government, 2003). However, Article 3 of Regulation No. 70 (2009) on Inclusive Education (Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2009) and Article 4 of Regulation No. 157 (2014) on the Curriculum for Special Education include learning disabilities as one of the specified disability categories: "Students with disabilities or students with special needs comprise: a. blindness; b. deaf; c. speech impairment; d. intellectual disability; e. physical disability; f. emotional and behavioural problem; g.

learning disabilities [emphasis added]; h. slow learner; i. autism; j. motoric problem; k. drug abuse; and l. other” (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014c, pp. 3–4).

Another government document categorises and explains learning disabilities on the basis of areas of conditions related to learning difficulty: “The identification of special needs children is focused on conditions that are internally caused. They refer to children with symptoms of specific learning disabilities, including dysgraphia, dyslexia, and dyscalculia” (Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2010, pp. 37–38). However, Wiguna, Kaligis, and Belter (2012) in their study used the term “learning difficulties” rather than learning disabilities. They define learning difficulties as a discrepancy between a student’s potential and his or her academic achievement. The use of different terms to describe learning disabilities indicates that the understanding of learning disabilities is subject to change, a situation that potentially offers the possibility of developing new understandings of this disability.

In Indonesia, the term learning disabilities refers to students’ “inability to learn” (*Indonesian: ketidakmampuan belajar/kesulitan*) (Suryani, 2010). Some studies on learning disabilities (see, for example, Pujaningsih, 2005; Rudiwati, Pujaningsih, & Ambarwati, 2010; Suryani,

2010) indicate that learning disabilities relate to academic-related difficulties, unmet learning outcomes, and low achievement in certain taught subjects, or slowness in learning. As a result, students with one of these characteristics are at-risk of being held back, which means that they are not promoted to the next grade level (Pujaningsih, 2005).

Pujaningsih (2005) argues in relation to classroom practice that Indonesian teachers do not understand the term learning disabilities even though they might be working with students labelled as learning disabled. Her study shows that teachers often represent students labelled as learning disabled as lazy, disengaged, demotivated, and passive. The findings of her study align with the findings of other studies (Christensen, 1999; Christensen & Baker, 2002; Kasler & Fawcett, 2007; Shifrer, 2013) that suggest teachers tend to identify students labelled as learning disabled from their manifested behaviours during learning activities. This means of identification suggests that learning disabilities are likely to be overlooked and/or poorly understood.

According to Graham and Jahnukainen (2011), school jurisdictions often expect students to “fit into” a schooling system that has been constructed with the notion of “normal” school child in mind. Within the Indonesian education system, the collective expectation is that all students should be able to achieve the KKM criteria within a set period of time. If they

do not, teachers start to raise concerns and ask questions such as these ones: “Why can’t they reach the KKM?” “Why do some students always get the lowest grades?” “Why can’t they read?” “I think they never study hard” or “I think he’s lazy.” All of these conjectures imply ability-related assumptions which can lead to students who are at the tail-end of the KKM being at risk of failure (Tuval & Orr, 2009).

Essentially, the ways teachers interpret the KKM criteria and how they construct the notion of learning disabilities show the interrelatedness of students’ learning and students’ academic results. The teacher’s interpretation of students’ learning may signify that labelling students as learning disabled results from the combination of educational practices and arrangements, and the social interactions that exist within the classroom setting. Through dynamic interactions between teachers and students labelled as learning disabled, or amongst students, the understanding of learning disability becomes deeply ingrained, institutionalised, and internalised in day-to-day classroom life (Carrier, 1990; Christensen & Baker, 2002; Harpur, 2012).

Addressing how Indonesian teachers and peers understand what it means to have students identified and labelled as learning-disabled is noteworthy because those understandings can influence how teaching and learning are organised (Wray & Medwell, 2006) for those students. Exploring

ways in which students labelled as learning disabled are treated in day-to-day classroom practices (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Christensen & Baker, 2002) could also inform what learning experiences are available or not available for these students in the classroom and what can be done to help schools (Askew & Lodge, 2000) support the development of inclusive education in general.

1.1.4. Understanding the terminologies used in this study

Throughout this study, I used the concept of learning disabilities put forward by Christensen (1999). She considered learning disabilities to be socially based difficulties arising out of schools failing to recognise and challenge those of their beliefs and practices that potentially contribute to the production of learning disabilities (Christensen & Baker, 2002). This failure means that some students will achieve and others will fail.

Learning disabilities is the term commonly used by the Indonesian teachers to describe students who are unable to meet the curriculum standards. The label teachers assign to these students is based on the teachers' evaluation of the students' academic achievements rather than on any diagnostic tools used to ascertain particular conditions.

Throughout this thesis, I use the term "students labelled as learning disabled" when referring to students labelled as such by the teachers who

participated in my study. It is important to note that my use of the term does not mean I support the ways in which students labelled as learning disabled are understood, but rather to reflect how the participating teachers described these students. The way these students are labelled may result in their limited opportunities to learn, lack of academic support, vulnerability of experiencing discrimination and negative relationships with peers.

The language used by the teachers to describe certain students may bring significant impacts for students' identities and learning. I choose to describe these students as "students labelled as learning disabled" given that the students' identities may be viewed and laid within their disabilities by teachers, which potentially devalue and influence how these students experience learning.

In this thesis, I conceptualise inclusive education as the practice of minimising barriers to participation and learning for all students (Ainscow, 2005; Ballard, 2004). The way I conceptualise inclusive education differs from the way it is understood nationally, which generally refers to the physical presence of students labelled as learning disabled in regular schools. The concept I use acknowledges that each student has a contribution to make within learning environments rather than only those students who "achieve".

It means education that promotes the learning and participation of all students regardless of their differences.

This acknowledgement needs to be combined with the understanding that schools may cater for some students while excluding others (Ballard, 1999).

1.2. Addressing the focus of the thesis

The lived experiences of students labelled as learning disabled, their peers, and their teachers during their daily classroom lives is the key focus of my thesis. The study's findings bring another perspective to understanding what it means to be identified and labelled as learning disabled. By giving voice to the students labelled as learning disabled in the two Indonesian schools that participated in my research, my aim has been to provide deeper understandings of how complex learning identities are for students labelled as learning disabled, and what it means to be considered learning disabled in practice. As Dudley-Marling (2004) suggests, the complexity of interactions between individuals within the situated context of schooling can produce different constructions of learning disabilities. In other words, how the ways people understand learning disabilities is contextually dependent because those meanings cannot be separated from the "relational context" (p. 485) in which teachers and students engage.

Within this thesis, I perceive the term “construction” as a process that continuously shapes and is shaped by social interactions between individuals in the classroom. How students labelled as learning disabled are represented thus depends on how the classroom is organised and on the meanings that teachers assign to students’ behaviours. This conceptualisation aligns with research by Dudley-Marling (2004) and Christensen and Baker (2002). They found that the process whereby some students are designated as learning disabled while others are not can only be situated within the context where teachers and students interact.

I therefore in this thesis also look at the pedagogical approaches the participating teachers were using when teaching students labelled as learning disabled. Pedagogical practices can potentially create barriers to these students’ participation and learning because of their teachers drawing on constructions of ability that potentially marginalise them from gaining rich and meaningful learning experiences (Christensen & Baker, 2002; Florian & Beaton, 2018; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The findings in this thesis also raise issues of social justice with respect to students labelled as learning disabled and lead to questions of what can be changed and what can be done differently to ensure successful inclusion for these students.

1.3. The rationale underpinning the study

The decision to conduct research with students labelled as learning disabled came from my personal and professional concerns about the attitudes I have observed towards students labelled as learning disabled in Indonesia. I therefore considered it imperative to explore Indonesian teachers' constructions about students labelled as learning disabled and how these teachers support these students in day-to-day classroom life. I also anticipated that challenging teachers' and students' understandings and beliefs about learning disabilities could help them critically explore and address what can be done better for students labelled as learning disabled. I furthermore wanted to explore ways of promoting inclusive pedagogical practices in general, given that inclusive education is about removing barriers to learning and ensuring participation for all students in their learning contexts. Finally, very little research set in Indonesian schools includes the perspectives of the teachers and the voices of the students labelled as learning disabled. For me, including students' perspectives in this study was important because their views and experiences are as valuable as the teachers'. I provide detailed information relating to student voice in Chapter Two.

Throughout this study I argue that teachers' constructions of learning disabilities influence whether the needs of students labelled as learning disabled are met or not met during classroom activities. Teachers'

constructions of learning disabilities also inform how they identify students labelled as learning disabled and interact with them through their teaching practices (see, for example, Robinson, 2002; Schwab, Holzinger, Krammer, Gebhardt, & Hessels, 2015; Sunardi et al., 2011), with those practices potentially supporting or limiting these students' opportunities to participate in learning and feel that they belong as classroom members.

1.4. My interest in the topic

I have been interested in investigating learning disabilities since I started doing research seven years ago. The topics I had previously researched related to identifying students labelled as learning disabilities and screening them for type of disability. My experience in the field of psychology has shaped my understanding that identifying students who are potentially at risk of developing learning disabilities should be done in the best interests of the students because not identifying and addressing that risk may adversely affect their life-long outcomes as members of society.

This view remained when I continued my graduate study in genetic counselling. I was frequently exposed to different types of gene-related diseases or disorders that necessitated a focus directed mainly towards finding the “faulty” gene recurring in family generations. I was familiar with using a pedigree or genealogical table that records information on family

relationships and disease-related history. The information on the table enables risk assessment calculations (see, for example, He & Li, 2007; Stefansdottir, Johannsson, Skirton, & Jonsson, 2016) that can lead to genetic tests designed to provide families with a better understanding of the risk their members have of inheriting the particular medical condition. My research revealed that this information often persuaded individuals and families to take measures to minimise the recurrence of genetic disease in the family, especially if that disease was likely to have adverse social and economic impacts on the family (Widayanti et al., 2011). The result of genetic tests required affected family members to undergo certain medical treatments to either prevent or lessen the difficulties associated with the condition.

I also learned from my research that learning disability has both genetic and environmental origins that influence how individuals perform in academic subjects. This view dominated my understanding of why some children differ in their ability to read, write, and calculate, or why some students fail academically while others are successful. The focus on the individual as the bearer of the disease or disorder aligns with the medical model that justifies problems associated with the disease or disorders as ones that are an intrinsic part of the individual (Kavale & Forness, 1995).

This view was still influencing me when I was asked to assist a colleague research a group of students in a public primary school. The school's head had referred these students to my colleague because of their learning problems. The school's head described these students as having "academic difficulties". During our conversation, the head indicated that such students could be found in each grade and that as a group they "sat" at various points along a spectrum of disability. Some of them were not able to read, some were unable to write, and some had difficulty with calculation; some had difficulty with all three. After our conversation, the headmistress invited a male student (pseudonym Edi) to meet us. She then interviewed Edi, as described below:

School head:	What do you want to be when you reach adulthood?
Edi:	I want to be in the police.
School head:	Join the police?
Edi:	[Nods yes.]
School head:	Hmm ... the police ... that's good ... but do you know that the police can read and write? Otherwise, he or she cannot help you ... So, if you want to be in the police... you must be able to read and write. Okay?
Edi:	[Silent]

While talking to Edi, the head explained to my colleague and me that Edi had reading and writing difficulties, and because of this he had been held back two-year levels. The head then told us that Edi came from a low

socioeconomic (SES) background. She said that, in her opinion, students with low achievement were more likely to derive from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This story is significant to my doctoral study because it exemplifies how assumptions developed by a school head and/or teacher can influence how students are portrayed and managed. What must also be remembered, however, is that assumptions like those of the school head are created within interactions among education systems, school personnel, and other professionals that produce or bed in definitions of what learning is about.

1.5. Research questions

The main questions framing my study are these ones:

1. What are the experiences of students labelled as learning disabled?
2. In what ways are these students being labelled in Indonesian primary school classrooms?

I also addressed several sub-questions:

1. What do Indonesian teachers and peers understand about students labelled as learning-disabled and how does that understanding affect teachers' practices and interactions between students labelled as learning disabled and peers?

2. What pedagogical practices do teachers employ that potentially support or hinder inclusive education of students labelled as learning-disabled within Indonesian classrooms?
3. What barriers are encountered by students labelled as learning-disabled in Indonesian primary school classrooms?

1.6. Organisation of the thesis

This thesis has eight chapters.

Chapter One introduces and outlines the focus of the thesis. In this chapter I explain how I came to be interested in this area of research and how the previous framework from which I understood learning disabilities introduced me to social constructionism. This new perspective guided me throughout this study. I also discuss the context of my study, which is situated in Indonesia, the development of the term “learning disabilities”, the Indonesian education system, and the development of and challenges associated with inclusive education in Indonesia. As I explain, my thesis focus helps explain the nature of my study and its potential for contributing to knowledge about and the practical considerations of education practice in developing countries. This contribution includes insight gained from the voices of learning-disabled students with disabilities, accessed through a social constructionist approach.

In **Chapter Two**, I review theory of social constructionism as a theoretical framework as well as several conceptual frameworks underpinning this research. These include discourses of disability, a theoretical model of teaching and learning, a pedagogical discourse, and a framework for participation. I also examine relevant literature, looking specifically at different constructions of learning disabilities as well as overlapping terms relating to learning disabilities, historical developments relating to learning disabilities, and how learning disabilities are understood in various places worldwide, including Indonesia.

Chapter Three outlines the qualitative research methods that I applied to my research, how I recruited the research participants, and how I collected and analysed my data. I outline the importance of exploring students' voices, especially those of students labelled as learning disabled. I also discuss the ethical considerations pertaining to my research.

In **Chapter Four**, I explore the findings from the interviews and the observations of teachers and students. I also discuss the teachers' and the students' beliefs and assumptions about learning disabilities and how these are articulated in day-to-day learning activities within the classroom.

The focus in **Chapter Five** is on the findings from the interviews with teachers, students labelled as learning disabled, and peers that pertain to managing the academic demands of the school. I discuss some practices in the classrooms initiated by teachers, such as grouping based on ability. I also examine the practices the teachers were using to grade students, and the dilemmas this process created for teachers as they endeavoured to meet school, local, and national standards of achievement. I also in this chapter present the data obtained from my observations of the use of various teaching and learning strategies during lessons in the classrooms of the participating schools.

In **Chapter Six**, I address how students labelled as learning disabled manage their social relationships with teachers and peers. I also present findings relating to this matter from my interviews with students labelled as learning disabled, peers and the teachers. In addition, I discuss how learning disabilities affect the way students labelled as learning disabled handle their everyday social life in the classroom.

In the penultimate chapter, **Chapter Seven**, I use a social constructionist approach to explain and discuss the dynamics of the three main findings of my study. I also explore the implications of these findings for students

labelled as learning disabled' learning and achievement and teachers' practices.

Finally, in **Chapter Eight**, I present the conclusions drawn from my study. I summarise the key findings, discuss the implications of the study's findings, outline its limitations, and offer recommendations and directions for further research. I end by reflecting on what I learned during my doctoral research.

The accompanying appendices include the observational schedules and the schedule of interview questions for the different interviewees.

1.7. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the research focus. It introduced the background to my study, including my rationale and reasons for undertaking it. I claimed that learning disabilities are socially constructed and that various constructions of disabilities and learning disabilities are evident in the Indonesian context. I also presented a brief account of the Indonesian education system and the country's development of inclusive education. I then presented the focus of my thesis and ended the chapter by outlining the structure of the thesis.

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, I explore the theoretical frameworks, in particular social constructionism, that guided and informed this study. The

chapter also presents relevant research theories pertaining to learning disabilities.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, which is divided into five sections, I explain the theoretical framework informing this thesis. The first section focuses on the theory of social constructionism that underpinned my research. Here, I examine how this theory has been utilised in other studies and highlight its implications for my work, namely to gain insight into what teachers' and students' understanding of learning disabilities, and into what supports need to be put into place to meet the needs of students labelled as learning disabled. In the second section, I consider the three studies (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Skidmore, 2002, 2004, and Smith & Barr, 2008) that I referred to when endeavouring to interpret and understand meanings from my participants' perspectives. The three studies focus respectively of the following: three models of teaching and learning (Smith and Barr, 2008), pedagogical models of discourse (Skidmore, 2002, 2004), and what the authors refer to as a framework for participation (Black-Hawkins, 2010). In the third section, I explore ability-related constructions and how these extend to learning and inclusive education. I discuss the importance of including students' voices in my study in the fourth section of this chapter, and use the fifth and final section to

identify gaps in the relevant research gaps and how my study helps fill those gaps.

2.2. Understanding the theoretical framework underpinning the study

I used social constructionism as my theoretical framework in this study because working from this perspective had the potential to challenge the commonly accepted understandings of learning disabilities that are products of social processes and interactions (Burr, 2015). In accordance with this perspective, learning disabilities can be defined in various ways because the identities of students labelled as learning disabled are achieved through social interactions. The interactions and experiences that individuals have within a context can shape and signify their perceptions of who they are at any given time (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 1994).

The interactions that students labelled as learning disabled have in the classroom with teachers and other students can influence how they perceive themselves and their roles as learners. How teachers and students perceive students labelled as learning disabled in relation to their position as learners has received little attention in Indonesia. That lack explains one of my aims for this thesis, that of gaining an understanding of how teachers and students in Indonesia perceive students labelled as learning disabled.

I now turn to a discussion of social constructionism as the theoretical perspective underpinning my research.

2.2.1. What is “social constructionism”?

Social constructionism assumes that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social interactions (Burr, 2015). The social constructionist approach has been used to understand meanings relating to health and illness (Conrad & Barker, 2010), race (Guess, 2006), gender (Ussher, Sandoval, Perz, Wong, & Butow, 2013), therapy (Paula-Ravagnani, Guanaes-Lorenzi, & Rasera, 2017), and disability (Grenier, 2007). The meanings attached to those phenomena are shaped by cultural and social systems (Conrad & Barker, 2010). Consequently, these meanings can influence the way they are experienced and presented, how society responds to them, and what policies are produced concerning them. Knowledge is subject to change as people continuously negotiate meanings and ways of understanding.

Burr (2015) identifies four main assumptions that characterise a social constructionist approach. They are, firstly, “taking a critical stance about taken-for-granted knowledge”; secondly, that our “understanding of the world is culturally and historically specific”; thirdly, that our “knowledge is sustained by social processes”; and fourthly, that “knowledge and practices are products of social actions” (pp. 2–5). She claims that any approaches that

accept one or more of these assumptions can be considered as a social constructionist approach.

Expanding on her explanation of the first assumption, Burr (2015) states that a social constructionist approach takes a critical stance toward our “taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves” (p. 2). When reality is presented as objective, positivist, and empiric, people accept the reality as truth. Truth relates to our assumptions or interpretations that our understanding of the world is assumed to be objective and unbiased (Burr, 2015). Therefore, social constructionism suggests that our assumptions or interpretations may be viewed as natural and accepted knowledge, but knowledge that needs to be challenged. For example, an “able” student is indicated from his or her ability to gain high academic achievement, unlike “less-able” students. In this view, the attribute “ability” is believed to be the quality that describes the individual’s competency. Therefore, a student who demonstrates low academic achievement is seen as in-educable. When the student is assumed to be disabled, people believe that he or she carries qualities that differ from those who are able. This knowledge is distributed and communicated through people’s interactions, which results in their acceptance and validation of the knowledge and meanings attached to disability as natural and objective (Gergen, 1994).

The second assumption that Burr (2015) describes maintains that the way we understand the world is historically and culturally specific. Meaning is inseparable from context. The way meaning is constructed and produced is situated within a particular culture in a specific time. As a result, meaning can be maintained, modified, or reshaped (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1994) by people within a certain place and time as a way to understand the world. For example, disability in Eastern culture is not addressed in the same way as in Western culture. In Eastern cultures, such as Indonesia, the religious and cultural aspects are inseparable from society's understanding of disability (Afrilita, n.d.; Hersinta, 2012; Riany, 2016). As Hersinta (2012) and Riany (2016) explain in their studies, religion has become a framework within which disability is accepted as the will of God. In some Western cultures, however, disability is believed to be caused by various factors, such as organic factors (Ravindran & Myers, 2012), societal factors, as Oliver (2013) explains, inform the social model of disability, and the complex interplay amongst biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors, as suggested by the biopsychosocial (BPS) approach (McKee & Rivard, 2011; Miodrag, Richards, Fedoroff, & Watson, 2020; Shakespeare, Watson & Alghaib, 2017).

The difference in the way disability tends to be conceptualised in Eastern and Western cultures demonstrates how cultural differences can lead

to different constructions and understandings of disability. For example, a study by Kabzems and Chimedza (2002) in Southern region of Africa found that disability is persistently associated with maternal wrongdoing, evil spirits, punishment, or a test from God. Another study by Haynes et al. (2000) that examined 357 Japanese and 118 US teachers' perceptions of students' learning problems found that the US teachers perceived students labelled as learning disabled as having deficits in academic skill areas, whereas the Japanese teachers emphasised students labelled as learning disabled as having weaknesses in social skills. The authors assumed that cultural factors contributed to the teachers' perceptions of learning disabilities.

Burr's (2015) third assumption is that knowledge is maintained "by social processes" (p. 4). Social processes involve people's interactions through which they share knowledge. Relationships help people to construct knowledge and understanding as they engage in meaningful dialogues using language. Frequent dialogues and constant interactions between individuals play a considerable role in constructing realities (Puig, Koro-Ljungberg, & Echevarria-Doan, 2008), with language as a tool to maintain reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and objectivity (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994). Through interactions, people generate concepts, ideas, and assumptions that shape their lives as they are habituated, institutionalised, and embedded in society

(Galbin, 2014). It is through this process that they reach agreement on what constitutes “truth” (Burr, 2015). For example, learning disabilities may receive various interpretations from different groups of people. For medical practitioners, the term learning disabilities is more likely to be interpreted as a neurological impairment that manifests in learning problems. For teachers, learning disabilities are indicated from a discrepancy between students’ potential and their actual academic achievement. This diversity of interpretation means that the reality is not simply present out there, waiting to be discovered, but is created by individuals who actively perceive issues in the world through different lenses. The implication of this aspect of social constructionism is that there are multiple interpretations of phenomena, with those interpretations developed within a social context. This socio-constructionist framework thus opposes the concept of ultimate truth as the one true meaning (Lit & Shek, 2002) and argues for the existence of multiple truths because each person has different interpretations of phenomena (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1994; Refai, Klapper, & Thompson, 2015). Consequently, a group of people cannot claim that their terms are the correct way to explain certain concepts or ideas because they will have developed certain kinds of agreed and shared language within particular contexts and not the others (Burr, 2015).

Burr's (2015) fourth assumption is that knowledge and social action go together. The construction of knowledge supports certain patterns that influence how we organise our social action (Burr, 2015; Nunkoosing, 2000). For example, social responses to disabled people align with the meanings people ascribe to disability. In societies that view disability as a negative condition, disabled people are likely to experience marginalisation. For example, disability is viewed by the Manggaraian society in Indonesia as God's curse on a family because of an ancestor's sinful behaviour in the past. This view causes people to feel reluctant to communicate with and support disabled people and their families. These families try to hide disabled family members to avoid stigma from society (Afrilita, n.d.). This example shows a consistency between people's beliefs about disability and how they treat disabled people and their families.

Within social constructionism, language is a tool to convey ideas (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Carrington et al., 2012; Nunkoosing, 2000). Language is the medium through which we understand our world. Language refers to words or vocabularies used to construct knowledge and relationships with other people, ideas, and things (Nunkoosing, 2000). Through language, we produce and acquire meaning of phenomena that is manifested through interactions between people within various social contexts (Burr, 2015; Conrad & Barker, 2010; Galbin, 2014). Also, through interaction, we are

challenged and allowed to critically examine our claims about and common sense knowledge of the world we live in (Galbin, 2014; Gergen, 2001; Nunkoosing, 2000). Presence of others becomes a prerequisite for producing knowledge and understanding social reality.

The use of a social constructionist framework in my thesis can be justified for three reasons. The first reason is that social constructionism allows for a focus on the meanings teachers and students attribute to students labelled as learning disabled and to learning disabilities. Teachers' understanding of learning disabilities reflects the teachers' beliefs that shape and define their students' identities and engagement in classroom society. By encouraging teachers to share their beliefs and views, I wanted to explore how teachers make meaning of learning disabilities, with that meaning framed through interactions and relationships in the classroom contexts. The implication here is that teachers and classroom contexts mediate relationships between disabled and non-disabled students, between teachers and students, and between students and their curriculum knowledge. Social constructionism was therefore a good fit for my study because it is a paradigm that not only emphasises people's search for meaning and understanding, but also invites people to challenge their commonly accepted beliefs and understandings (Galbin, 2014; Gergen, 1985).

By “challenging most of our common-sense knowledge of ourselves and the world in which we live” (Galbin, 2014, p. 83), social constructionism offered me a tool to mediate my former and newly developing understandings about what learning disabilities mean for teachers and students. As Galbin (2014) emphasises, people’s understandings are formed from experiences and how they perceive the world. Each individual creates the world based on their perceptions of the actual world that emerge from their interactions with others. Therefore, people’s view of reality is constructed through language by which they produce various meanings, and this process explains contributed to my interest in exploring the language teachers and students use when describing students labelled as learning disabled and how this affects the way students labelled as learning disabled are treated.

My second reason for using social constructionism was to help me explore teachers’ views and concepts about students labelled as learning disabled that are manifested in their pedagogical practices. Social constructionism is concerned with explaining how people’s ideas or concepts can influence their actions (Burr, 2015). For example, if a teacher believes that a student labelled as learning disabled is incapable of learning, the teacher may not give that student as many learning opportunities and supports as he or she gives the other students during classroom activities. I realised that a social constructionist approach would help me understand and focus on

practices within the classroom context that actively construct the meaning of being students labelled as learning disabled that perpetuates and reinforces stereotypical assumptions about these students, whose identities are shaped by the way they are portrayed, positioned and represented in daily classroom life.

My third reason for using social constructionism as my theoretical framework in this study was based on ontological and epistemological assumptions. According to Burr (2015), ontology deals with the nature of reality. Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge. The ontological position of my study is that learning disabilities are constructed in different ways as a result of interactions between teachers and students. The epistemology of this study relates to how knowledge about learning disabilities is created through shared understandings between teachers and students. Therefore, knowledge potentially changes over time, and, in turn, influences practices in the classroom and how teachers and students understand the way learning disabilities operate. I considered that investigating teachers' and students' thoughts on and interpretations of learning disabilities and the meanings they ascribe to those disabilities would be valuable in terms of helping me understand how those views play out in daily classrooms as adequate and legitimate realities.

I now turn to the notion that learning disabilities are (arguably) socially constructed.

2.2.2. Learning disabilities as socially constructed concepts

In this section, I explore the complexity of the concept of learning disabilities. Various words have been used to refer to learning disabilities, such as blindness, aphasia, dyslexia, brain injury and behavioural symptoms, minimal brain damage, or strephosymbolia (Colker, 2011; Courtad & Bakken, 2011; Kavale & Forness, 1995), dysgraphia, and dyscalculia (Lyon & Fletcher, 2001). Historically, learning disabilities have been viewed from the premise that neurological factors rather than environmental factors play a significant role in causing learning problems. Interestingly, this assumption has continued into the twenty-first century (see, Fletcher & Grigorenko, 2017; Lyon & Fletcher, 2001; Nicolson, Fawcett, & Dean, 2001). This significant body of research in area of learning disabilities over the last decades provides evidence of neurological differences in children labelled as learning disabled (Nicolson et al., 2001), but my particular interest in this study is to offer a different perspective as another way of understanding how the term learning disabilities is used and the impact of the term.

Different formal definitions have been developed to promote a better understanding of learning disabilities (American Psychiatric Association, 2018; Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2015; the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994, 2016). However, these various understandings share the similar view that learning disabilities have a neurological basis that is manifested by a discrepancy between achievement and potential related to academic skills, while excluding the role that contextual factors play in causing learning disabilities (Lyon, 1996; Stanton-Chapman, Chapman, & Scott, 2001). These aspects are believed to become significant indicators to signify learning disabilities.

The definition of learning disabilities proposed and updated by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) has become particularly influential because it has received legitimations from various professional representatives in the United States (Hammill, Leigh, McNutt, & Larsen, 1981; NJCLD, 1994, 2016) and is used internationally (Emam & Alkharusi, 2018; Woodcock & Vialle, 2010). The NJCLD definition is relevant to my study because it demonstrates the commonly held understanding of and dominant discourse on learning disabilities, as stated:

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These

disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other disabilities (for example, sensory impairment, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance), or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural or linguistic differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences. (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2016, n.d.)

The above definition of learning disabilities has within it several assumptions: (1) learning disabilities involve failure to achieve in particular academic areas; (2) learning disabilities are grounded in the individual-deficit orientation that is neurologically-based; and (3) learning-disabilities are not the result from of external causes.

I acknowledge that there is a body of work that diagnoses learning disabilities as a neurological deficit, however, my study does not intend to investigate the neurological aspect of learning disabilities, rather, I am interested in understanding learning disabilities as a socially-constructed concept.

The way students labelled as learning disabled are situated in the education system may legitimise the assumption that these students' problems are a result of individual deficit. Thus, in the school context, where

a student's success or failure is believed to rely on his or her ability, a learning-disabled student's failure to achieve in some area of the curriculum is equated with lack of ability (Dudley-Marling, 2001).

In the next section, I discuss three studies that show application of the social-constructivist approach.

2.3. Using three studies to understand meanings

The three studies I refer to here are those by Black-Hawkins (2010), Skidmore (2002, 2004) and Smith and Barr (2008). Together, they helped me frame the analysis of my data and understand different ways of discussing some of the discourses that develop in schools and that are inseparable from their ever-changing sociocultural context. More specifically, I drew on some of the ideas and models in these studies for my research. They included three models of teaching and learning (Smith & Barr, 2008), a theoretical model of pedagogical discourse (Skidmore, 2002, 2004), and a framework for participation (Black-Hawkins, 2010). The three studies also resonate with my work because they use a similar premise of social constructionism. They address various practices in different school contexts that are inseparable from the broader socio-political and cultural factors that I thought could deepen my understanding of the complexities and nuances of how teachers articulate learning.

Although the three studies have different focuses of study and use Western perspectives, which show different sociohistorical contexts from Indonesia on how concepts such as disability and inclusion are understood. These studies demonstrate complex relationships between pedagogical practices and educational management that systematically influence how different schools operate and negotiate the meanings attached to teaching, learning, achievement, and inclusion. Teachers are bounded by a system that adopts certain practices based on particular concepts or ideas, as evident in my study findings (see Chapters Four to Six). Skidmore's (2002, 2004) study and Smith and Barr's (2008) study became significant for my research because they show how some sociocultural traditions within school contexts still influence the ways teachers ascribe meaning to and approach students' learning difficulties. This aspect of the authors' respective works required me to scrutinise how policies, practices, and day-to-day classroom interactions contribute to understanding ideas related to achievement and inclusion. In her study, Black-Hawkins (2010) argues that rather than seeing achievement and inclusion as separate, incompatible concepts, we can see the concept of participation as one that mediates the concepts of inclusion and achievement. Her *Framework for Participation* provides us with a tool that we can use to explain how a wide range of students differentially experience participation

in school, and how the underlying values and beliefs that shape the culture of schools influence the nature of that participation.

In the next three sections, I discuss the key-points I took from the three studies.

2.3.1. Three models of teaching and learning

Smith and Barr's (2008) three models of teaching and learning helped me explore and understand teachers' ideas and concepts about learning with respect to students labelled as learning disabled. Smith and Barr (2008) argue that the development of a democratic and inclusive society can be established through classroom and school practices. In support of their claim, they recount how Northern Ireland schools moved toward educational inclusion using principles of equality, respect for diversity, and interdependence and thus changing traditional teaching practices into a participatory inclusive practice framework. Smith and Barr's (2008) study is relevant to my research because it demonstrates practices that are underpinned by "professional discourses" (p. 404) on how teachers view and respond to student diversity.

Smith and Barr (2008) drew their models of teaching and learning from Watkin's (2005) study that explored classroom complexity organised according to the dominant view of teaching. Smith and Barr describe the nature of teaching, learning, curriculum, and the role of the teacher in their

models. The three models are built on these respective views of learning: *learning equals being taught; learning equals developing individual sense-making; and learning equals creating knowledge as part of doing things with others* (p. 408). Each model is explained below.

Smith and Barr's (2008) first model – *learning equals being taught* – is characterised by the premise of “curriculum as fact”, which means that the curriculum is organised as cognitive-based knowledge. When teachers and students agree to accept “facts”, the facts become “real” and “true” (Burr, 2015). Learning is seen as a fact-transmission process. Teachers are dominant persons in the school, and it is they who influence and have power over what students see and learn as facts. As the dominant perspective on learning, the model positions teachers in the central role of teaching; their job is to impart knowledge, concepts, and skills. Students are viewed as dependent learners and less knowledgeable; the teachers are seen as experts. This model of learning also perceives learning as the task of the individual, giving emphasis to the importance of ability, which is constructed as fixed and unchangeable. Teachers and the broader education system therefore see students' educability in terms of their ability to achieve. This model also underpins traditional ways of measuring and assessing students against their academic achievement (Morton, Rietveld, Guerin, McIlroy, & Duke, 2012). It could be argued that this model of learning also supports traditional pedagogical

practices that involve hierarchically-structured teacher–student relationships, such as those evident in Asian cultures (Wang & Du, 2014; Wong, 2016; Zulfikar, 2013), and uphold deficit pedagogies (Macartney & Morton, 2013).

The second model of teaching and learning that Smith and Barr (2008) describe is *learning equals individual sense-making or developing a community of learners*. Learning viewed as equivalent to individual sense-making or to developing a community of learners sees learning occurring through the “curriculum as activity” (p. 408). Here, students achieve the teaching goal by engaging in various learning activities – activities that can help students develop new understandings and meanings. Smith and Barr (2008) describe students as a community of learners who actively participate in the learning environment. However, they also see learning as a process that occurs at the level of the individual, even though the students engage with one another through the learning activities teachers offer. Teachers still control teaching and learning, and so are still viewed as experts in facilitating and helping students’ learning.

The last model of teaching and learning is *learning equals building knowledge through doing things with others, or co-construction or developing a learning community*. This model views learning as a process equivalent to building knowledge through interactions with others or through

co-constructing or developing a learning community. In this model, the learning community involves teachers and students who together construct knowledge (Smith & Barr, 2008). As such, teachers and students are both learners, and they can learn from each other. Knowledge is constructed socially and is therefore a result of shared meaning constructed through collaborative dialogue. The *learning equals building knowledge* model emphasises “curriculum as inquiry” (p. 408). All learners are invited to participate and collaborate, and the contributions from each individual are valued because learning is achieved through constructing knowledge with others. Under this model, participation in learning with and alongside other students is central to them gaining experiences and developing identity as learners and a learning community.

2.3.2. A theoretical model of pedagogical discourse

Skidmore’s studies (2002, 2004) on pedagogical discourse set out the realities of teaching and learning at schools, where certain discourses operate in daily classroom and school life. Skidmore argues that the views teachers have of their students are circumscribed by the wider system that defines, determines, and signifies students’ educability. His ideas helped me to understand what was happening in the Indonesian classroom context, and how the teachers in my study were adopting their thinking about their

students, and how that thinking was shaping and being shaped by the education system.

Skidmore (2002, 2004) introduced the concept of pedagogical discourse to illustrate the effect of teachers' sets of beliefs about their students on their pedagogical practice. He investigated how teachers make sense of those of their practices that include students labelled as having learning difficulties in regular classrooms. In his 2004 study, Skidmore presented and explored the two contrasting pedagogical discourses displayed in two mainstream schools in England. He used a case study approach that included semi-structured interviews to capture the perspectives of a range of staff who represented different positions and responsibilities within the schools. The results of the study showed that the two schools implemented different pedagogical practices based on what they believed about their students' characteristics. Teachers' different pedagogical practices towards students with disabilities in those two schools reflected their respective "discourses", and the discourses represented the teachers' understandings of and beliefs about the reality of schooling cannot be separated from their organisational values.

Skidmore (2002, 2004) identified two categories of pedagogical discourse: the discourse of deviance and the discourse of inclusion. Each

discourse can be identified through use of five dimensions: students' educability, explanation of students' educational failure, the school's response to students who need support, theory of teaching practice, and views of curriculum (Skidmore, 2002, 2004). Table 1 provides a summative account of these dimensions.

Table 1. Dimensions relating to two forms of pedagogical discourse

Dimension	Discourse of deviance	Discourse of inclusion
Students' educability	Emphasis on using a hierarchy of cognitive ability to categorise students	The view that each student has the capacity to learn
Explanation of educational failure	The source of learning difficulties lies within the deficits of attributed ability	The source of learning difficulties lies within the insufficiency of curriculum presentation
Response of schools	Learning support is provided to remediate students' weaknesses	Learning support is to reform curriculum and develop pedagogy across the school
Theory of teaching expertise	Expertise in teaching focuses on the possession of specialised subject	Expertise of teaching centres on students' active participation in

	knowledge	the process of learning
Model of curriculum	An alternative curriculum should be provided for less-abled students	A general curriculum should be applied for all students

Source: Adapted from Skidmore, D. (2002). A theoretical model of pedagogical discourse, *Disability, Culture and Education*, 1(2), p. 120.

According to Skidmore (2002, 2004), a *discourse of deviance* positions learning as peculiar to the individual student. This view supports the deficit assumption that a student's ability influences his or her success or failure. Thus, in response to student failure or gaps in achievement, teachers use remedial education as a means of helping students who experience learning difficulties (students labelled as learning disabled) achieve expected competencies; the teacher believes that these students cannot learn all that is in the regular curriculum or learn to the levels required. Because the remediation is characterised by intensively-based learning focused on those parts of the curriculum where the learning-disabled student is not achieving, it can limit that student's opportunities to learn all that is in the prescribed curriculum or the advanced knowledge and skills in that curriculum. The belief here is that students labelled as learning disabled need to adapt to the curriculum rather than the curriculum be adapted to the needs of the students.

The curriculum is thus narrowly understood as a fixed body of knowledge, by which learning is determined on whether or not students meet the prescribed targets.

In contrast, *a discourse of inclusion* identifies that all students have potential to grow. People holding this view believe that that establishing students' educability should not be established on the basis of a deficit assumption – an assumption that sees learning capacity as fixed and innate. Instead, all students, including students labelled as learning disabled, should be viewed as capable of learning through their dynamic interactions with teachers and other students. In this discourse, each individual carries his or her experience into a jointly constructed production of knowledge. Students' failure to learn is subsequently viewed as a product of organisational structures, curricula, and pedagogical practices that do not respond to student diversity. Learning support consequently challenges the school to make changes that meet the needs of students rather than focus on learning weaknesses exhibited by individual students. Because students are central in learning, the teacher's role is to promote their students' learning by facilitating and incorporating a wide range of teaching methods and by developing a climate of collaborative learning so that students can have rich, meaningful, and successful learning experiences. Accordingly, a responsive curriculum, that is, a curriculum “accommodating of human difference”

(Skidmore, 2004, p. 126), is necessary to ensure that all students can participate fully in a learning community.

2.3.3. The Framework for Participation

Black-Hawkins (2010) developed her *Framework for Participation* as a model that could be used to explore the complexities involved in promoting a school culture that supports achievement and inclusion and strive to minimise barriers to achievement and inclusion. Her framework helped me understand these complexities and from there recognise practices in the classrooms that potentially benefit some students but exclude others.

According to Black-Hawkins (2010), the complex relationship between inclusion and achievement cannot be separated from school culture and the development of inclusive practices and policies. Nor can that relationship be separated from how these concepts are defined in different school settings. She used her *Framework for Participation* to examine policies, practices, and daily interactions between teachers and students in four schools related to how these schools are challenged to examine schools' complexities and ambiguities in articulating achievement and inclusion. *The Framework for Participation* aids understanding of the complexity of these concepts and associated concepts because it allows the researcher to explore school members' various understandings of these concepts and the implications of

these understanding for achievement and inclusion. In this framework, the concept of participation is deployed to facilitate achievement and inclusion. This form of participation involves active engagement in learning, recognition, and acceptance as members in a school community. However, the way participation is enacted varies within and across schools because different school members articulate participation differently. For example, students labelled as learning disabled may have limited access to certain subjects in the curriculum that require high levels of academic competency. This limitation happens when the education system and school members share values and beliefs that uphold academic achievement. This situation can potentially deny students whose achievements are not congruent with those the values the right to participate in learning.

The Framework for Participation comprises three elements: participation and access, participation and collaboration, and participation and diversity (Black-Hawkins, 2010). *Participation and access* relates to students' access to learning, and the phrase simply means "being there" (p. 32). It therefore refers to students' experiences of being not only welcome but also invited to participate in school activities. This element additionally includes physical presence in the classroom and having access to the curriculum, and to spaces and places. *Participation and collaboration* references students' active role to make choices about what they are learning

and how to work with one another and to be involved in learning. *Participation and diversity* refers to recognition and acceptance of diversity. Black-Hawkins' study (2010) is valuable because it highlights the complexity involved in articulating school members' values and beliefs, the extent to which achievement and inclusion are understood in schools, and the relationships between these concepts.

2.4. Understandings of key concepts in this study

In this section I discuss several concepts that became important for my study. The concepts are learning, ability, achievement, success and failure, curriculum, and assessment. My discussion here is directed toward providing understanding of how those concepts could be applied within the context of my study. I realise that understandings of these concepts can vary among different school members, and that this variation can potentially influence how these concepts are practised in day-to-day interactions in the classrooms. I am also mindful of the consequences arising out of the beliefs and views underlying these concepts.

2.4.1. Learning, curriculum, and assessment

The concept of learning is linked to the action of transmitting information. For Smith and Barr (2008), learning relates to constructing knowledge with others. The way teachers construct learning may affect how they

communicate their student-learning expectations, supports, and opportunities during their daily interactions with students.

Vygotsky (1994) argues that learning happens in situations where students can engage and interact with one another. Morton (2014) highlights learning as a process involving relationships between and among teachers, students, and families. Putting relationships at the heart of learning helps students to learn actively because it means they are welcomed and valued, thus affirming their positions as visible contributors to their learning communities. As Smith and Barr (2008) point out, when learning involves interactions between teachers and students, it is the dialogue between them that enables ways of knowing to develop that facilitate the subsequent achievement of meaning and understanding. This process perceives learning as a social activity rather than an individual activity (Nasir & Hand, 2006; Wertsch, 2011).

As a socially constructed concept, learning refers to classroom activities and approaches rather than what happens for the student who is learning. The way learning is enacted daily varies across cultures and contexts, with that diversity reflected in legislation, policies, and curricula. Teachers and the society of which they are a part have a significant influence on students' learning because that learning is embedded within the schooling

system (Chen, Masur, & McNamee, 2011; Macartney & Morton, 2013; Smith & Barr, 2008) and the way that system's curriculum frames learning (Morton et al., 2012).

As a contested concept, curriculum has various meanings. A curriculum cannot be separated from the context and the educational philosophies that underpin it (Yang & Li, 2018). The curriculum can refer to official documents (Morton, McMenamin, Moore, & Molloy, 2012), what students learn and experience in the classroom, teaching materials, and content (Petersen, 2016), and organisation, activities, and teaching strategies (Cheung & Ng, 2000; Petersen, 2016). Each curriculum also reflects the global and national pressures that constantly play out in schooling systems (Hayward, 2013). For example, the global pressure of having competitive and competent learners encourages schools to develop curricula that provide students with activities, materials, and content designed to develop their analysis and problem-solving skills. Curricula have become the means by which society determines what learning it believes should be transmitted across generations (Hayward, 2013).

In the Indonesian context, the curriculum represents a set of values and practices that controls what is taught and achieved (Indonesian Government, 2003; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013). Within this context,

constructions of learning disabilities can be influenced by how the curriculum is enacted in classrooms. That enactment shapes and is shaped by teachers' understandings of teaching and learning and of what should be learned, and by their expectations of students. Because teachers can shape how the curriculum is enacted in classrooms, there is always the potential for neglecting each student's uniqueness and their individual learning needs (Suratno, 2014).

For example, Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum focuses mainly on developing students' critical thinking, as indicated by its "project-based and scientific approach" (Suratno, 2014, p. 3). Students are therefore led to anticipate their scholastic achievement as a process occurring through activities that stimulate knowledge construction (Kustijono & Wiwin, 2014; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013). However, some studies (see, for example, Ardianingsih, Mahmudah, & Rianto, 2017; Kustijono & Wiwin, 2014) demonstrate that teachers in Indonesia have developed assumptions about learning that differ from the ones informing the 2013 Curriculum. In general, though, as Kustijono and Wiwin (2014) concur, Indonesian teachers characterise learning as a process that is teacher-centred, textual, and results-based, and involving structured activities. Kustijono and Wiwin's study also shows that Indonesian teachers experience difficulty providing the learning strategies necessary to enhance students' learning. Their study illustrates that

teachers' values, beliefs, and understanding about learning are contested, especially in terms of what learning is and is not.

Curriculums cannot be separated from assessment, the process whereby students are evaluated against learning achievement standards, and those students who are not meeting those standards are identified. Assessment records what has been taught and learned (Morton et al., 2012). Relatively recent research on assessment in Indonesia has tended to focus on students in junior secondary schools (Azis, 2014, 2015; Umami, 2018), utilise mixed methods study (Azis, 2014, 2015; Umami, 2018), and investigated teachers' understanding of the purpose of assessment (Azis, 2015). Umami (2018) found that teachers typically have limited training in testing and assessment practices, which markedly limits their ability to support students to achieve learning objectives. In Aziz's study (2015), the majority of the Indonesian teachers participating in it understood the purposes of assessment to be improving teaching and learning and facilitating students' interest in learning. Aziz also found an association between teachers' beliefs about assessment whether their students had met the prescribed competencies. However, one of the most interesting findings in her study was that some of the participating teachers assumed that assessment has an insignificant impact on teaching. These teachers believed that assessment is unreliable and lacks validity. As such, it is possible that the teachers in her study saw assessment as a process

that does not change students' learning. Her study has relevance for my study because of the premise that teachers' views of learning shape how they understand assessment and how they accordingly apply it, or even if they apply it, as a means of describing students' learning.

2.4.2. Ability, intelligence, achievement, success and failure

The concept of intelligence has evolved over time. The historical view of intelligence holds that intelligence is influenced by hereditary factors rather than by cultural factors (Ansalone, 2009). Intelligence has long been assumed to be the product of "biological processes" (Resnick & Schantz, 2015, p. 342). Intelligence is persistently assumed to be a fixed trait within an individual rather than acquired knowledge or skills. It has been defined in particular ways, such as academic achievement or cognitive abilities (Hernandez, Finch, Speirs, Neumeister, Burney, & Cook, 2014; Resnick & Schantz, 2015). These constructions of intelligence influence not only how people think about intelligence but, more importantly, their understanding of and actions toward students labelled as learning disabled, whom they perceive as less intelligent (Resnick & Schantz, 2015). Constructing 'intelligence as "a determined mental capacity" (Gale & Densmore, 2002, p. 8) has led to students' abilities being distributed along a spectrum of what

is assumed to be normalcy, a practice which can adversely affect students' potential to achieve and learn.

The concept of ability is also of paramount importance to my study because the way ability is understood is grounded in teachers' views or beliefs about what students can and cannot do, and these, by implication, may result in learning gaps among some students. As I argue in this thesis, the belief that ability is measurable and can therefore be measured via cognitive tests may influence teachers' and students' understandings of learning disabilities. Some studies (see, for example Siivonen, 2013; Wilkinson, Littlefair, & Barlow-Meade, 2013) point out that ability has different meanings in different learning contexts. Siivonen's study (2013) demonstrates how schools use the construct of cultural background, which includes premises about students' ages, gender, and social class, as a means of understanding students' ability to learn. A literature review by Wilkinson et al. (2013) on how physical education programmes in Queensland, Australia and Sweden constructed physical ability found that the programmes determined ability in relation to competence in the performance of physical skills. A study by Callahan (2005) featuring 355 non-native high school students in northern California focused on tracking (as in placing students in different school tracks according to ability) and English proficiency level showed that teachers had lower expectations of non-native students who had

low levels of English proficiency. The teachers' deficit assumption about English learners dominated these students' learning, which marginalises them and limits opportunities and abilities to achieve. The above studies indicate that when teachers narrowly interpret ability and then apply that interpretation to students, they see those students who do not possess the knowledge and experiences needed to achieve prescribed learning activities as lacking "ability". The studies also indicate that any analysis of ability should take into account practices located at the macro context, such as curriculum and policies, especially as the way ability is understood tends to legitimate and reproduce the dominant view about ability (Wilkinson et al., 2013).

Conceptualisations of academic achievement tend to be limited because of being linked to the precepts of cognitive function or academic performance (Westendorp, Hartman, Houwen, Smith, & Visscher, 2011). Academic achievement has become a marker used to justify students' academic identities (Caraballo, 2019). As I argue in this thesis, the construction of academic achievement may legitimate and validate assumptions about students from certain backgrounds in ways that create achievement gaps and marginalise them from gaining learning experiences and opportunities. Studies by Gale and Densmore (2002) and Woodcock and Vialle (2010, 2011) confirm that ability is frequently equated with academic achievement.

The study by Gale and Densmore (2002), for example, found that the expectations primary- and secondary-school teachers in Australia had of their students were influenced by the attributes teachers assigned to each student. Students who achieved were considered to have high ability; those who do not achieve were deemed to have learning disabilities. The “high-ability” students received more learning opportunities than those who seen as low achievers.

The concepts of “success” and “failure” have been accorded various interpretations, such as those in studies by Woodcock and Jiang (2013) and Woodcock and Vialle (2011). The authors of these two studies investigated teachers’ constructions of success and failure. Findings showed that the teachers understood both these concepts as representations of students’ ability or of their academic-related behaviours. Success and failure can thus be viewed as a representation of intelligence. An additional finding in Woodcock’s and Vialle’s (2011) study, which featured 444 Australian pre-service teachers, was that these teachers perceived lack of ability as the cause of students labelled as learning disabled’ failure.

Teachers who believe that success and failure are determined mainly by innate ability are likely to expect that students they consider able will succeed and those whom they think are less able as likely to fail (Carrington, 1999;

Rist, 2007). Another study of significance to my research is one by Gale and Densmore (2002), who found that teachers' beliefs and practices influenced and were influenced by certain discourses centred on explaining students' success or failure. My research extends Gale and Densmore's study because, as I argue, teachers' constructions about students labelled as learning disabled are influential because they are in position of power and control with respect to students.

A number of studies (see, for example, Bonal & Tarabini, 2016; Brantlinger, 2001; Buckingham, Beaman, & Wheldall, 2014; Chandler, 2014; Chen & Yu, 2016; Diuk, Barreyro, Ferroni, Mena, & Serrano, 2019; Kincaid & Sullivan, 2017; Ruiz, McMahon, & Jason, 2018; Sirin, 2005; Wilcockson, McElhatton, & Fawcett, 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2013; Yelgün & Karaman, 2015) report that students' socioeconomic backgrounds influence teachers' constructions of ability. These studies show that students who are socially disadvantaged are at risk of being marginalised and labelled as incapable. How socioeconomic background influences teachers' evaluation to students labelled as learning disabled is explained further in my discussion chapter (see Chapter 7, pp. 271-275). Teachers who hold stereotypical beliefs about the role of socioeconomic backgrounds on students' ability can influence these students in ways that limit their achievement (Chandler, 2014; Siivonen, 2013; Sirin, 2005). Chandler (2014) asserts that teachers' beliefs

about students' low achievement reflect society's emphasis on the assumption that parents from low-socioeconomic backgrounds do not work hard enough. As a result, teachers minimise learning opportunities for these students. Knowles and Lander (2011) argue that low- socioeconomic students are disproportionately represented by teachers who represent the dominant class in the society. As Chandler (2014) contends, teachers' lack of understanding about how poverty affects these students' life opportunities results in teachers' tendency to blame students for their failure rather than support them to achieve.

Socioeconomic background has been frequently associated with student achievement (for a few examples, see Brantlinger, 2001; Gale & Densmore, 2002; Wilcockson et al., 2019). A meta-analysis study by Sirin (2005) of 74 studies that among them covered 128 school districts revealed a medium to strong association between student achievement and socioeconomic background. Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged family backgrounds were more likely than students from middle-class families to exhibit low achievement (Ansalone, 2009). Many studies across time and place have shown strong links between socioeconomic background and academic achievement and school failure (Ansalone, 2009; Brantlinger, 2001; Wilcockson et al., 2019). In relation to the context of my study, it is possible that student failure is often attributed to family background rather

than structural inequality. In other words, student failure is constructed in terms of family deficiencies, rather than a failure of systems. As a consequence, the school's role in perpetuating of treating students inequitably based on whether they achieve or not may be overlooked.

In the next section I highlight the way disability is understood by teachers and how their understanding influences their responses to student diversity.

2.5. Teachers' perceptions of disability

Research on teachers' perceptions of disabilities have covered a number of considerations, including the association between those perceptions and pedagogical practices (Hsieh, Hsieh, Ostrosky, & McCollum, 2012); teachers' understanding of students' difficulties (Busch, Pederson, Espin, & Weissenburger, 2001; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Kataoka, van Kraayenoord, & Elkins, 2004; Mohamed & Laher, 2012); teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach students with disabilities (Schneider, 2017); the causes of disability (Emam & Alkharusi, 2018); and teachers' attitudes to disability (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Tindall, MacDonald, Carroll, & Moody, 2015).

Some studies indicate that teachers who hold positive attitudes towards students with disabilities are likely to interact positively with those students

(Carroll, Forlin, & Jobling, 2003; Dessementet, Morin, & Crocker, 2014; Thaver & Lim, 2014), and to promote these students' participation in learning activities (Sharma et al., 2008). Teachers' knowledge of disability also contributes toward teachers' attitudes towards disability. When teachers have adequate information about students with disabilities, they are more confident about including these students in classroom programmes and teaching them (Sharma et al., 2008; Tindall et al., 2015). The 603 pre-service teachers from Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, and Singapore who featured in the study by Sharma et al. (2008) had received training in special education and had had opportunities to develop interactions with students with disabilities. They all expressed favourable sentiments toward interacting with students with disabilities. Sharma et al.'s (2008) findings indicate that teachers' attitudes can shape or change the way teachers engage with students with disabilities and facilitate these students' inclusion in schools.

Some studies (Nolkemper, Aydin, & Knigge, 2019; Sze, 2009) suggest that teachers' beliefs about students with disabilities lead to these students' conforming to the teachers' beliefs and expectations. According to Sze (2009), the labels teachers assign to students with disabilities may precipitate and/or perpetuate these students' understandings of their ability to the extent that their achievement accords with the designated label; the label thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Francis et al., 2017; Sze, 2009). This

body of work strongly suggests that teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities can affect these students' confidence in learning and achieving.

In related vein, some studies indicate that teachers' perceptions about disability shape and are shaped by the teachers' experiences with students with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2008; Sze, 2009). As Campbell, Gilmore, and Cuskelly (2003) have shown, the interactions that teachers have with students with disabilities can change, either in positive or negative ways, those teachers' overall perceptions of disability. Campbell et al.'s (2003) study included 274 pre-teachers in an Australian university, and found their positive attitudes towards inclusion of learners with disability came from a combination of knowledge about disability and experiences with people with disabilities. The authors also found that attitudes toward a specific disability can influence attitudes toward disability in general. Campbell et al. (2003) furthermore found, as did Sharma and Sokal (2016) and Sze (2009), that pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions about disability may influence the way they make contact and develop interactions with students with disabilities, and that if those perceptions are positive the resultant teaching practice may reduce exclusion and promote activities that support inclusion for all students in the classroom.

In the next section I explore literature focused on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and on how inclusive education is understood and manifested in classroom contexts.

2.6. Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education

The studies reported in this section mainly reflect on teachers' perspectives about what they consider important with respect to inclusive education. Among the studies on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in general are those by Hsieh et al. (2012), Thorpe and Azam (2010), and Trent and Dixon (2004). Other relevant studies include those on teachers' sense of self-efficacy to include learners with disabilities in inclusive schools (Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Subban & Sharma, 2005), and teachers' attitudes toward inclusive/integrated education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Fejgin, Talmor, & Erlich, 2005; Westwood & Graham, 2003). Several of the studies just mentioned found that successful inclusion depends on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (see, for example, Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012; Avradimis & Norwich, 2002; Sharma & Sokal, 2016), and on prior experience teaching students with disabilities (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Subban & Sharma, 2005). One of the conclusions that Avramidis and Norwich (2002) drew from their review of the literature is that teachers may hold positive attitudes toward inclusion, but that these attitudes become

negative if they find themselves working with severely students with disabilities.

Some of the findings relating to the association between teaching experience and attitudes to inclusive education are contradictory. A study by Topping and Maloney (2005), for example, found that teachers with higher levels of teaching experience did not favour inclusive education. However, Kurniawati et al. (2012) and Thorpe and Azam (2010) showed that the teachers in their studies developed more positive attitude toward inclusion as their education experience with students with disabilities increased. Kurniawati et al. (2012) also found that special education training and experience teaching special needs students also influenced teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusion. It is worth noting that the study by Topping and Maloney (2005) was conducted earlier than the study by Kurniawati et al. (2012) and Thorpe and Azam (2010), an indication perhaps that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education may reflect increasing knowledge and awareness in educational communities about students with disabilities and inclusion. However, another quantitative study by Hsieh et al. (2012) with 321 Taiwanese first-grade teachers revealed these teachers had neutral perceptions of inclusive education. Hsieh et al.'s study also disclosed that teachers' familiarity with the concept of inclusion and students with disabilities contributed to their perceptions of inclusive education. Sharma

and Nuttal (2016) underlined from their study that when teachers believe that inclusion is beneficial for students, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward inclusive education and to include students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Another group of studies have shown teachers developing negative attitudes towards inclusion (Alquraini, 2012; Avramidis & Norwich, 2000; de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Thorpe & Azam, 2010). The studies by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) and Fejgin et al. (2005) revealed that students' level and type of disability and teachers' knowledge about a disability or disabilities affected teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities. The teachers in Avramidis et al.'s (2000) study were more likely to develop negative attitudes toward inclusive education when teaching students with emotional and behavioural difficulties as compared to teaching students with other disabilities. The above studies additionally found that teachers' knowledge about how to educate students with disabilities shaped the teachers' attitudes towards these students, which in turn influenced whether or not they were willing to include these students in their classrooms.

The negative attitudes held by teachers in these studies indicate that teachers may feel inadequate when teaching students with disabilities even

when they hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Such teachers perhaps lack not only confidence in their ability to manage diverse students in their classrooms (Sharma & Nuttal, 2016) but also practice in implementing their knowledge and skills in real classroom situations involving students with disabilities. The findings of Sharma et al.'s study (2008) also suggest that having positive attitudes towards inclusive education does not always encourage teachers to remain committed to inclusion in their practices.

What I have highlighted in this section has been the attitudinal aspect of teachers with respect to disability and inclusion that affect the education of students with disabilities. In the next section I look at literature on student voice and outline my justification for incorporating the voices of students in my study.

2.7. Acknowledging and including student voice

Including student voice in research challenges the dominant assumption that students are incapable of articulating their experiences, concerns, and ideas about their schooling life (Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014; Qvortrup, Bardy, Sgritta, & Wintersberger, 1994). Many scholars for many years have argued for the importance of listening to the voices of students (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 1999; Allan, 1999, 2010; Carrington, Bland, & Brady,

2010; Fielding, 2001; Gordon, 2010; Mahbub, 2008; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). The need to involve students' voices in research has been emphasised by the United Nations (UN), in Article 12 of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Einarsdóttir, 2007). Article 12 highlights children's right to communicate their views in all aspects affecting their lives. Thus, recognition of these rights has given emphasis to the importance of student voice and student participation in school decision making (Quinn & Owen, 2016). However, including the voices of students with disabilities in research related to inclusive education is relatively new (Beveridge, 2004; Jubran, 2015).

Adderley et al. (2015) contend that listening to students' voices highlights the importance of their views on inclusive education. Jubran (2015) likewise makes the point that student voice is central to understanding what students think of inclusive education. Messiou (2006) states that "children's voices should not be used as a strategy for developing more inclusive forms of education, but as a manifestation of being inclusive" (p. 313). Because inclusion is a dynamic process, it is important that researchers explore not only teachers' views but also students' views because the students are the ones who experience first-hand the impact of inclusive or exclusive practices. The information and views that they consider important may differ from those of their teachers. Making a distinction between

teachers' and students' views can help school recognise what potentially promotes or hinders inclusive education (Adderley et al., 2015; Messiou, 2002).

Some studies (see, for example de Leeuw, de Boer, & Minnaert, 2018; Herz & Haertel, 2016; Manzoor, Hameed, & Nabeel, 2016; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, & Moorad, 2019) have shown that voices of students with disabilities are not expressed in their school life. The de Leeuw et al. (2018) study asked 28 students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) about their experiences of social exclusion. The students said they never informed their teachers about their experiences of being victimised because of fear of being humiliated by their teachers or because they lacked trust in their teachers. The students with disabilities' relationships with teachers and their peers also influenced these students' feeling of connectedness with their school. What I would like to underline at this point is that students with disabilities' voices matter in terms of helping teachers and school leaders improve schools and promote inclusion (Andriana & Evans, 2017; Askew & Lodge, 2000; Cook-Sather, 2002; de Leeuw et al., 2018; Messiou, 2012; Wray & Medwell, 2006). The voices of students with disabilities are limited in Indonesian research in education (Andriana & Evans, 2017) because most studies explore teachers' views (see, for example,

Kurniawati et al., 2011; Sheehy & Budiyanto, 2014). It is therefore timely to include the views of students with disabilities.

I knew that the inclusion of student voice in my study would also help me reflect on and gain a better understanding of students labelled as learning disabled' views, perspectives, and experiences related to their lives. These are all valuable and relevant for them but may be hidden or go unnoticed in school settings. As Barton (1997) says, listening to students is a manifestation of inclusion that honours and values their ideas and beliefs. This approach also contributes to enabling students to be active participants and to receive opportunities wherein they can articulate and construct their experiences (Messiou, 2008, 2012).

2.8. Research gaps

My study addresses two major research gaps in the area of education and learning disabilities in Indonesia. The first gap is the limited use of social constructionism as a critical lens through which to explore educational contexts and issues. Many studies have been undertaken in regard to identifying and assessing learning disabilities in Indonesia, but these focus on the understanding that learning disabilities are deficit (Pujaningsih, 2005; Rudiwati et al., 2010; Suryani, 2010). My main argument in my study is that learning disabilities are socially constructed, rather than being a reality that

has been revealed. As a socially constructed concept, learning disabilities are located within the context of learning activities involving social interactions between teachers and students, and among students. Instead of seeing learning disabilities as an individual pathology, this study offers another way of understanding the contributions of classroom context in creating and maintaining practices that align with assumptions and meanings attached to learning disabilities.

The second gap in the literature this research addresses is that of involving young students labelled as learning disabled as participants in the study. Most education research in Indonesia has used adult-based perspectives that have not represented the voice of students. One result of this focus on adults is that students are likely to become the object of the study. Involving students in research is thus important in my study for two reasons. Firstly, students labelled as learning disabled' voices seem to be lacking in research. Listening to what these students have to say is valuable because it can give us a better understanding of their experiences. Therefore, incorporating students in my study gives them opportunities to voice their "overlooked voices" (Allen, 2012; Cook-Sather, 2006). Secondly, students should be incorporated in a study such as this because they are part of the learning community. My commitment to involving students in my study shows that I aspire to listen to and become aware of the ways in which they

perceive their school situation, and to potentially confirm that they possess the capacity to interpret information about their learning and inclusion in school environments differently from adults (Davis, 1998).

2.9. Chapter summary

My purpose in this chapter was to set out the theoretical framework, that is, social constructionism, which forms the basis of my study. I also wanted to demonstrate how this framework would help me develop understandings about my chosen topic of investigation. I also included an explanation and discussion of additional theories that could help me develop a better understanding of my findings, and considered how terms relevant to this study could be explored from a social constructionist perspective, with the aim of demonstrating how those terms are understood and play out in educational contexts.

I concluded this chapter by highlighting the importance of listening to the voices of students in research, so as to understand and give their views due weight, and thereby challenge and inform classroom practices that potentially undermine their ability to make meaning of their experiences. Giving them voice also allows them to share what matters for them in relation to their learning experiences.

The focus in the next chapter is on the research methodology I utilised for my study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how and why I used certain methods to address my research questions. Here, I explore ideas, opinions, and values that shape and are shaped by the classroom community. Social constructionism guided my judgement about the methodology and continuously shaped my role as an ethnographic researcher.

I decided to use an ethnographic case study approach (Merriam, 1998) because it would allow me to challenge what I saw and heard, as I became directly involved in the participating schools. I also wanted to portray the complexities of the classrooms by providing rich and deep descriptions from multiple perspectives of my research participants: teachers and students. Descriptions of the research methods I used to collect and analyse the data also feature in this chapter. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss the ethical issues associated with my research and how I responded to them.

3.2. The research paradigm

The paradigm is central in a research inquiry. A paradigm can be defined as the belief system that directs researchers to investigate a phenomenon (Guba

& Lincoln, 1994). It captures the way researchers look into activities, relationships, and challenges in the world, draw meaning from what they see, and then decide what is valid and important to document (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe the characteristics of research paradigms that involve (1) the ontological aspect, which seeks answers to questions concerning reality; (2) the epistemological aspect, related to answering questions about reality; and (3) the methodological aspect, which deals with ways to reveal reality.

In this section, I explain how I approached my study using an interpretivist approach as a way to make sense the world. According to Kelly, Dowling, and Millar (2018), this approach recognises that participants make meaning of their lived experiences. Exploring and understanding how they make sense of those experiences means that subjectivity is at the heart of interpretivism but that it also takes into consideration the complexity of the social contexts that can shape individual meaning (Kelly et al., 2018; Young & Collin, 2004).

The interpretive paradigm is an umbrella term for approaches such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and constructionism (Grix, 2004). Interpretive researchers' main concern is seeking understanding of the complexity of the world from the point of view of those who

experience it (Schwandt, 2000). Thus, the interpretive paradigm suggests that various realities are continuously created and constructed by individuals as a result of their interactions with their social and cultural environments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Reality is understood as subjective, inter-subjective, relative, multi-layered and complex, and as irreducible and unlikely to be simplified into numerical data (see, for example, Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Crotty, 2003; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). I know that ambiguities and uncertainties are part of my understanding of learning disabilities within classrooms. I also understand the potential for inconsistencies to arise in the understandings I gain from my interactions with my participants. Rather than ignoring them, I know I need to continuously challenge my existing concepts and ideas through further exploration.

In this study, my aim has been to understand the lived experience of students who were labelled as learning disabled, who participated in my research. I therefore spent time during school weekdays (six days per week) interacting and talking with the teachers, students, heads of schools, and administrative staff (when possible) I contacted and/or met with during my field study. I also undertook semi-structured interviews with them, to probe for greater understanding of information resulting from earlier discussions.

3.3. Qualitative research and justifications

Qualitative methods allowed me to focus on an in-depth examination of the research data by exploring and understanding the complexities of the lived realities of the participants. These methods also helped me answer my research questions regarding the experiences of students labelled as learning disabled in regular primary schools.

Qualitative research requires researchers to spend time with participants, and without any form of research intervention gain rich descriptive data in naturalistic and authentic settings. This type of research is inductive and interpretive; it is interested in taking into account individual's perspectives and meanings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I wanted to tell the stories of teachers and students in everyday classroom settings from their perspectives. More specifically, I wanted to delve into their stories and explore how they were interacting and learning by observing and interviewing them about their behaviours and their thoughts about their learning experiences.

3.4. The design of the study

The design of the study is an ethnographic case study, and it explores teaching and learning practices with students labelled as learning disabled in specific contexts, that of regular public primary schools in Indonesia. For me,

the value of the ethnographic case study design is its potential to provide a rich portrait of a single setting that can contribute to knowledge and teaching and learning practice, and allow me to unravel the complexity of the case (Simons, 2009). The model's combination of ethnography and case study also assured me that I would be likely to see the context and the interactions of school members as indispensable parts of the wider social system (Walters, 2007), and that the voices of those people could not be interpreted apart from their sociocultural contexts.

Ethnography enables researchers to understand a particular culture-sharing group by immersing themselves in every-day settings to gather data from the emic perspectives of participants, and then to make sense of the resultant information (Fetterman, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Hammersley & Traianou, 2007). Ethnography suited my study because it enabled me to capture the complexity of the problems that happen in schools and to use a variety of complementary research methods to do so. I knew ethnography could help me provide rich and comprehensive descriptions of my participants' knowledge and experiences in schools (Pole & Morrison, 2003; Vine, Clark, Richards, & Weir, 2018).

Ethnographers are challenged to recognise and respond to taken-for-granted practices in a school context by making the familiar, unfamiliar.

Although I had a professional relationship with people in School One, it appeared from my observations that the school had experienced some organisational changes since my last visit. These included, for example, appointment of a new school head (school principal) and new teachers. The students were also new to me, which made a context that had previously been familiar, somewhat unfamiliar.

I was aware of any potential role during my fieldwork that might cause my participating students to think that I had deceived them, especially when I took on the role of substitute teacher when their teacher could not come to school or when the teacher had other work to do. There were times in both schools that the class teachers asked for my assistance with handling their classes while they left to undertake other administrative responsibilities. As I was the only adult in the class, they assumed that it was alright to ask me to help them. I felt that it would be inappropriate to refuse their requests. I nonetheless explained my position so I could focus on my research role, but because of limited resources and my familiarity with students and the classroom situation, the teachers still asked for my help. Although I substituted for the teachers two or three times, the limits of my role were determined by the teachers. For example, they asked me to monitor their students as they did their learning activities.

I was also aware of the power-relationship issue between me and my student participants (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). Listening to my participants' stories as I engaged in dialogues with them became my strategy to minimise the issue of power imbalance (Råheim et al., 2016). Therefore, being open about my research and its aim from the beginning with those I interacted were key factors in remaining true to the ethnographic approach.

I negotiated with my participants and others who were part of my research how the findings of my study would be disseminated. I also assured everyone involved that they would be granted confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore, in this thesis, all names presented in the chapters presenting the study findings (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) are pseudonyms.

3.5. Starting my fieldwork

Each school head from my two participating schools arranged a meeting with me and asked me to discuss my project briefly. I also gave them my written study proposal at this time. We started by providing and exchanging ideas and information about the students labelled as learning disabled in their schools. They both admitted that there were some challenging students who had learning and behavioural issues in some classes, but they said they did not have more information to offer regarding these students, as not only the School One head but also the School Two head were new appointees to their

respective schools. Before being school heads, they had worked as classroom teachers for several years; therefore, their appointments were their first experience of being a school head. I explained to them my interest in understanding how students labelled as learning disabled learn at school, and told them about my passion for working with students with disabilities at school.

Each head then arranged a formal meeting at their school and introduced me to all teachers as a student-researcher who would spend some months observing in the schools. I explained the purpose of my research to the teachers and presented my research plan in front of the school staff. During the meeting, I gave the school staff the opportunity to ask questions, especially any relating to the students that I expected to see in class, and I let them know what I would be doing in classes during my visit. I also informed them that I would not in any capacity evaluate their teaching. By assuring them of this, I hoped the teachers would not feel intimidated by the prospect of me spending several hours a day in their classrooms. I explained that I was interested in observing the classroom situations and interactions between teachers and students.

I also explained that I was interested in knowing what was going on in the classroom and interacting with the students during learning inside and

outside the class. I mentioned that most days I would sit in the back observing the class. Again, mindful that my presence for a certain period of time might be seen as threatening and potentially create awkward and uncomfortable feelings among some teachers and students, I wanted to make as clear to them as I could that my observing would be without judgement. I knew this reassurance was important because I was aware that following them for a long period of time might influence their behaviour in ways unlikely to be evident if no “new” person was in their classes. I did not, for example, want a situation where teachers always maintained and expressed a positive outlook about the school in general and the classroom in particular.

When I gained approval from the schools to conduct my study on their premises, I had already negotiated (in anticipation of that approval) a starting date, as I realised that gaining permission could take time. The first days in the schools were interesting for me. I developed a rapport with the students as they began to get to know me and asked questions about where I lived, my reason for coming to their school and particularly to their class, and whether I would be in other classes. I asked the teachers to allow me whenever possible to sit with the students and at the same seated level as them, and to do the task they were doing with them, as a way to build rapport with them and minimise the adult–children hierarchical status.

I found I had to explain and negotiate my role over and over again during my time in the schools. However, the adult to children status that I had hoped to avoid was still highlighted through, for example, the teachers telling the students that they should behave appropriately because I was there. I continued to be perceived by the teachers in each school as an outsider who was interested in their school. It seemed to me that the teachers expected the students to have a similar view about me, although I preferred them to see me as their friend. I found that my expectation was not entirely achieved, as evident in this entry from my journal:

This is my first time coming to the class. I walk behind the class teacher and let her enter her class first. The students are looking at me, seem curious. They see me from my head to my toes several times, maybe more than three times while I am standing next to their teacher. I look at all the students and try to be relaxed, then smile at them. The class teacher introduces me to them, asking them to respect me, saying, “*bu* [Indonesian word to greet a mature female adult, in English is “Mrs”; emphasis added] Costrie will be in our school for some time, so I want you to respect her, watch out for your behaviour and talk, so *bu* Costrie will have a positive outlook toward you. Then she looks at me, with her gentle smile, asking where I want to sit once I enter the class with her: “Where do you want to sit, *bu* Costrie?” We are standing in front of the class as I gaze the class and then look at her, saying, ‘Is it possible for me to sit at the back?’ She nods her head gently and uses the thumb of her right hand, giving a sign of the appointed chair I can sit on. Pointing to a thing or a place by using the thumb of the right hand is considered as polite in certain cultures, especially when it relates to interacting with a person/people we respect, in this case is me as a guest, an outsider whose background is from a university. (Field note, School One)

During the first two weeks, my relationships with the teachers seemed distant. I perceived that they were not used to having an “outsider” observe their classrooms every day. To minimise the distance, I decided to spend more times with the teachers whenever they were available so I could develop rapport with them. As I spent more time in both schools, the teachers seemed to be more relaxed with my routine presence in the schools. I found this valuable because I was relatively at ease, and once the teachers stopped making concessions when I was present, I gained a better understanding of how the schools and the classrooms were run. My relationships with the students seemed to be effortless, as they were keen to see a new person visiting the school. The students were interested in getting to know me. They did not seem anxious in my presence and asked me many questions. They often involved me in their conversations. In fact, they introduced me to some terms they often used when they talked to one another and explained the meanings to me.

3.5.1. School selection criteria

I purposefully selected the two public regular primary schools in this study (School One and School Two) as case studies because the schools in which I conducted my research needed to fulfil several criteria. Firstly, and most obviously, they had to have students labelled as learning disabled in their

classes. I confirmed that they did by asking the teachers in the schools how they identified students labelled as learning disabled, to which some of them replied that these students had difficulty learning basic skills and had lower grades than the other students.

Secondly, the two schools provided me with somewhat different advantages in terms of my research. School One was a good choice for me because I had collaborated with it in the past. Coming back to the school not only reminded me of what I was doing last time I was there but also provided me with the advantage, as I previously noted, of a feeling of newness, because I knew that several aspects of the school would have changed in terms of students, teachers, and the school situations. I knew of School Two from a teaching friend, who suggested I could do my research there. She told me she had students labelled as learning disabled in her class, and so was working as a teacher in the school while I conducted my research there. The information she and other teachers in the schools gave me about their students indicated they knew know about student heterogeneity and could identify that heterogeneity among their students.

Thirdly, both schools were not registered as inclusive schools. In Indonesia, school must meet certain criteria to be an inclusive school (Direktorat Pembinaan Sekolah Luar Biasa, 2007; see Chapter One). As

indicated in Chapter One, limited schools in Indonesia have implemented inclusive education (Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Khusus dan Layanan Khusus, 2019). Working with inclusive schools may be beneficial for me as school staff are relatively prepared to teach diverse students, I would argue that doing a study in non inclusive schools would allow these schools to have the potential for being inclusive because they also had students with disabilities learning alongside their peers as a few students with disabilities had been admitted and learned alongside their peers in both schools.

Fourthly, the majority of students in the schools were from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as shown in Table 2. The table also provides brief data on school type, ages of the children attending the schools and the roll of each school.

Table 2. Overview of the two case study schools

School	Type of school	Age range	Socioeconomic background of students	School roll
School One	Public primary	Six to 12 years	Low to mid	200
School Two	Public primary	Six to 12 years	Low	95

3.5.2. Study approvals

Gaining approval for my study to commence took several months –from November 2016 to February 2017. First, I sought approval from the University of Canterbury Education Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) and the Indonesian government. While the ERHEC was reviewing my proposal, I sent my formal application for permission to conduct the study to the Indonesian Ministry of Internal Affairs. As soon as I received approval in writing from the ministry, I had to continue the process by applying for approval at both the provincial and local levels where the schools were registered. As soon as I received all necessary approvals, I began collecting my data. Officially, my data collection encompassed February to August 2017.

During February to March 2017, I visited the two schools alternately. During the first week, I visited School One for four days and then School Two for two days. In the second week, I changed the pattern, spending two days in School One and then four days in School Two. My main goal was to develop rapport with the participating students and teachers during the first two months while familiarising myself with the schools' environments, such as the classrooms, and with other students and school staff.

Additional information about the case schools

Once in the schools, I was able to collect more information about them, especially their commonalities and differences. One similarity was that they were regular public schools in residential areas. The other similarities between the schools were (again as previously noted) that the school heads commenced this role in September 2016 and before becoming heads had taught in classrooms. Another similarity was that one teacher was responsible for just one class and therefore taught the same students during the academic year. The teachers were usually the centre of the learning. They taught most of the lessons except for English, religion, and physical education.

When I interviewed the two school heads regarding the composition of the students enrolled in their respective schools, they said that a few students could be classified as “special education needs”. These students included those using wheelchairs, those with limited mobility, those with intellectual disabilities, and those experiencing behaviour difficulties.

The main difference between the two schools was the schools’ positioning in league tables. School One had long enjoyed a reputation as one of the leading schools in the national league table for years. Within the local district, it had achieved the highest average achievement score in the national examination (the *Ujian Nasional*). School One held an A for the accreditation

score. School Two held a *B* for the accreditation score. The other differences was that the majority of the students (as already noted) enrolled were from various socioeconomic backgrounds, from low to middle levels. Another difference related to student behaviour. According to the teachers' information and my observations, students in School One were relatively quiet and seemed to be submissive to their teachers. In contrast, students from School Two were likely to be recognised by teachers for their behavioural issues, for example, fighting, quarrelling, and brawling.

As a researcher, I was aware that school background might influence the way I reported my findings. I also realised that different schools have various patterns of relationships between teachers and students, and among students (Watkins & Wagner, 2000).

Description of School One

School One, a state primary school, is located in the middle of a residential area. Its vision was "Being excellent in achievement, being polite in behaviour, having identity and progress based in science and technology." The vision statement hung on the wall next to the school head's office. In addition to the school head, the school had eight female teachers and one male teacher. Each class consisted of between 30 and 40 students. The extent of teaching experience among the teachers ranged from 2 to 25 years.

Classes began at 7:00am and ended in accordance with grade level. Grades 1 and 2 ended at 10:00am, Grade 3 at 12 noon, Grade 4 at 1:30pm (because the teacher held an additional class for the students in this grade for at least one hour), and Grades 5 and 6 at 1:00pm. After school, most teachers did not leave the school. Some stayed in their classes to do other schoolwork, and some talked in the teacher room. In general, all teachers left the school at 3:00pm.

School One had weekly routine activities that involved teachers and students. Every Monday, they had the flag ceremony, and on Tuesdays to Fridays had gatherings in the school yard. The school head mentioned those activities as “habitual” activities (Indonesian: *pembiasaan*); they began around 6:30–7:00am. During the activities, each teacher passed on information to the students regarding school values, such as obedience, respect, hygiene, discipline, and industry.

Description of School Two

School Two was also a state primary school. It was located in a quiet neighbourhood and had a field in front of it. The school’s motto was “Preparing students to achieve in developing noble personality, autonomy, and in mastering knowledge and technology.” I did not see this motto hung up anywhere around the school. Some motivational phrases, such as “Books

are the open door of knowledge” were written and pinned up in each classroom and along the school corridor.

In addition to the school head, the school had five female teachers and three male teachers. Years of teaching experience across the eight teachers ranged from 2 to 15 years. The number of students enrolled during the 2016/2017 academic year was 95. During my time at the school, each class consisted of between 8 and 20 students.

Classes started at 7:00am. Once the students heard the bell, they started to march in front of their classes. One student would become a leader, and he or she would give commands and the other students would comply with those commands after which they could enter the class. The weekly routine activities done on weekly basis were held on Mondays and Fridays. The activity on Mondays was the flag ceremony and on Fridays it was gym activities. Although all classes started at 7:00am, they ended differently: 10:00am for Grades 1 and 2, 11:00am for Grade 3, and between 12 noon and 1:00pm for Grades 4 to 6.

3.6. Engaging with the student voices

As I explained earlier in this thesis, I decided to involve students as my participants because I considered they would have ideas and views that needed to be acknowledged and valued. Although student voice receives

more attention in research nowadays, the extent to which it varies across countries, including Indonesia (see, for example, Andriana & Evans, 2017; Irwin & Johnson, 2005; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

For me, listening to students' voices is about appreciating what they consider important, meaningful, and significant in their lives, rather than ignoring or undervaluing their voices as irrelevant to and insignificant within education. As I explained in Chapter Two, students' voices should be seen as equally important as adults' voices. As Cook-Sather (2006) emphasises, acknowledging students' voices means acknowledging students' presence and capability to speak up and make known their lived realities in general, and school practices in particular.

In my view, students should be entitled, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), to express their perspectives as they make meaning of their experiences and ideas. However, the advice in Article 12 of the convention that "due weight" should be given to children's age and maturity when encouraging them to express their views made me aware that I needed to consider this advice during my study. Nonetheless, I was adamant that I needed to treat the views of my participating students as being just as important as adults' views. I therefore

sought to learn from by providing them with opportunities to discuss “their own learning” without fear (Whitehead & Clough, 2004).

3.6.1. Descriptions of the participating students

The teachers of the students who participated in my study described them as underachieving academically as “learning-disabled.” I was aware that in order for identity a student with learning disabilities, some standardised criteria have to be met, as proposed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2014). The level of intelligence resulting from a standardised intelligence test needs to show a discrepancy between ability and achievement, and there needs to be evidence of deficits in certain learning area(s), such as reading, spelling, writing, and calculating (IDEA, 2014; Murphy, 1998). In describing my students, I also need to set out my rationale for using the term “learning-disabled” in my study. I used it because this is the term used in the Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education for Students with Abnormalities and Gifted/Talented (Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2009). It is listed among other types of “abnormalities” (the word used in the regulation) in Chapter 3 Article 2 of the regulation:

Peserta didik yang memiliki kelainan sebagaimana dimaksud dalam ayat (1) terdiri atas: a. tunanetra; b. tunarungu; c. tunawicara; d. tunagrahita; e. tunadaksa; f. tunalaras; g. berkesulitan belajar; h. lamban belajar; i. autisme; j. memiliki gangguan motorik; k. korban penyalahgunaan narkoba, obat terlarang, dan zat adiktif lainnya; l. memiliki kelainan lainnya; m. tunaganda.

Students with abnormalities as mentioned in Chapter 1 include: a. blind; b. deaf; c. speech impairment; d. intellectual deficit; e. physical impairment; f. behaviour problems; g. *learning disabilities* [emphasis added]; h. slow learner; i. autism; j. motoric impairment; k. drug abuse; l. other impairments; m. double impairments.

The term learning disabilities receives its legitimation as one of the official categories of abnormalities in the Indonesian education system through its mention in the above article of the regulation. None of the abnormalities listed in the article is accompanied by a formal definition.

Four of the eight students (see the next section) who participated in my study had been identified as learning-disabled by their class teachers due to their learning problems and low achievement. Within the context of Indonesian education setting, it is teachers who play a significant role in determining and identifying students' learning problems rather than using other professionals, such as a doctor or a psychologist to diagnose the possibility of having learning issues. Students who were labelled as learning disabled were continually struggling in particular academic area(s) related to calculating, reading, and writing. Within the context of my study, being

labelled as learning-disabled did not necessarily require formal diagnosis using IQ tests from certified psychologists to justify the level of intelligence. The use of the IQ test is not a compulsory practice in the Indonesian education system. Students are most likely to be labelled as learning-disabled on the basis of difficulty meeting the school's expectations and/or the specific settings in which the need for the label learning disabilities is required (Murphy, 1998). Consequently, it is generally teachers rather than other professionals who determine which students are learning-disabled. Thus, early on in my data collection, it became obvious to me that the labelling could not be separated from the social and educational contexts surrounding students' behaviours and the meanings teachers assign to those behaviours.

The measure the teachers in the two schools were using to evaluate students' performance was a set of written criteria pertaining to minimum achievement achievements. These criteria are called the KKM criteria (see Chapter One, Section 1.1.2.) and there are sets of them for each taught subject, such as language, maths, and science. Students in the schools labelled as learning-disabled were students whom the teachers perceived as not measuring up to the KKM standards.

3.6.2. The participants

Twelve people from the two schools agreed to participate in my study. They included three class teachers (one from School One and two from School Two); one subject teacher (from School One); and eight students (four students labelled as learning-disabled and four students said to be non-learning-disabled). The range of teaching experience among the four teachers was more than 2 to 12 years, as explained in Table 3.

I asked the class teachers to nominate the students who they considered were experiencing learning problems in their classes. The teachers also nominated the peers who would take part in my study. These students were ones the teachers perceived as talkative and who would be most likely to talk to me and provide me with information. Giving authority to the teachers to nominate the students to participate in my study minimised intervention from me that might have put pressure on the teachers to meet my request.

Table 3. Teachers' characteristics

School	Teachers	Age (years)	Teaching experience
School One	Lestari	27	2 yrs 4 months
	Annisa	28	2 yrs 6 months
School Two	Endah	39	8 yrs
	Aminah	41	1 yrs 7 months); 12 yrs 5 months (previous school)

Table 4. Students' characteristics

School	Students	Age	Number of being held back
School One	Nining*	10	-
	Santi*	10	-
	Student 1	10	-
	Student 6	10	-
School Two	Putri*	10	-
	Wawan*	11	1
	Student 3	10	-
	Student 4	10	-

* labelled as learning disabled

3.7. Participant observations

Observations play a critical role in an ethnographic approach to research. Spending an optimal period of time doing the fieldwork, considered by ethnographic researchers to be at least six months (Fetterman, 2008; Vine et al., 2018), enabled me “to internalise the basic beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations of the people under study” (Fetterman, 2008, p. 291).

My participant observation work included observations that I conducted as unobtrusively as I could (see below) of the participating students' daily interactions in different settings, such as the classroom, canteen, playground, library, hall, and extracurricular activities. I observed them engaged in both structured and non-structured activities. The structured

activities consisted of planned activities run by the teachers, such as those that were part of lessons conducted mainly in classrooms. There were times when lessons were delivered outside the class, especially physical education.

To learn more about the students' participation and interaction from the students' point of views, I also involved myself in doing the tasks assigned by the teachers, such as those relating to maths, English, and gym. I also took part in their daily activities, both inside and outside the classroom, and on different occasions, such as during breaks, field trips, and class time. The main reason why I did this was to build trust and minimise the hierarchical status of adult versus child as I negotiated my role over and over again during my field work. The non-structured activities were mainly led by the students themselves (Yuen, 2004), especially during the 15 minutes of the first break time and the 15 minutes of the second break time.

I wrote field notes on what I saw during my observations inside and outside the classroom. I wrote them both onsite and after reflection at the end of the day. However, I wrote most of my field notes outside the schools, because of two factors. Firstly, as a participant observer, it was difficult to take notes onsite. Secondly, issues of privacy appeared, as some students wanted to read the rough notes that I sometimes wrote during my observations. To try to limit their curiosity, I sometimes allowed them to see

some of my key words or graphics, and when I did this I was careful that there was no mention of names of students and teachers. I also had to be careful that my field notes made no evaluative comments about class situations or the actors involved in those situations; rather, I only described what was happening or had happened during my observations.

I decided that cross-checking the veracity and validity of my observations with the participants would be done during later observations and/or the interviews. The cross-checking would allow me to minimise any bias on my part and aid my ability to accurately interpret the data. While the cross-checking rarely happened on the same day as my observations for that day, I did query any information with them I was not sure about as soon after those observations as I could. I also asked the participants at these times to clarify something I was uncertain of or give further explanation.

3.8. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most common tools employed in qualitative research. The interview has become an essential method because it allows researchers to explore participants' beliefs, experiences, and intentions around particular topics, guided by some general questions that are relatively open-ended (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Interviews can also serve as a powerful and sensitive tool for researchers, because they enable them to

capture the lived meanings of the participants' everyday experiences. According to Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin (2009), the interview is a meaningful conversation through which to achieve understanding from information given by the participants.

I used the semi-structured interview because I knew it would help me gain comprehensive understandings about the views and experiences my participants had with respect to their lives at school, the things they and their peers did together. I felt confident the interview approach would also help me understand what their experiences were and how they made meaning of their experiences, rather than limiting their information to only what I might want to hear. Such a stance would furthermore allow for the collection of rich and valuable information imparted from different perspectives. By using semi-structured interviews, I sought to learn to be receptive, especially with regard to new ideas and arguments that I might come across and that I would deal with on receiving unexpected responses from my participants. One of my aims therefore in using the semi-structured interview was to understand the views of my participants without imposing any categorisation that might limit the inquiry and remaining open to how it developed over time within contexts.

Use of the semi-structured interview would also, I hoped, encourage my participants to express their views with a certain degree of freedom, and without any intervention from outside parties. This freedom and lack of threat had the potential for discussion about what seemed to be significant to them regarding the issue of learning disabilities. Finally, semi-structured interviews would allow for more spontaneous new research questions, based on my participants' responses, that I had not previously been considered. I sought to probe my participants' views about issues related to being classified as learning-disabled (Hassanein, 2015).

I prepared the interview protocol in advance and in accordance with my research proposal, but then redeveloped it based on my initial visit to the schools and the information I received from the school heads and several teachers. When conducting the main interviews, I modified and made changes to the questions, such as adding or varying the questions as the interview unfolded to ensure the participants would fully comprehend the meaning of what I was asking them. I also asked added questions during later interviews, with the questions arising out of the participants' previous comments. The interviews were in the Indonesian language but sometimes mixed with a student's local language to help me familiarise myself with that student and thereby obtain more information about the topic I was asking. I

realised that utilising languages that were familiar to my participants would help them become more engaged with the interview questions.

The course of each interview was guided by the teachers' and students' understandings of disability; learning and belonging; learning and explicit teaching and learning strategies; and friendship and participation. The topics I wanted to cover served as a guide for the questions and the interview process. My guiding questions, developed as a part of the interview schedule, acted not as leading questions but as starting points to create introductory, follow-up, probing, and interpreting questions (Kvale, 1996). Appendix L outlines the topics and the guiding interviews I used during my study.

I interviewed the two heads of school and the participating teachers individually, whereas my interviews with students varied, occurring either individually or with the students in pairs, depending on their requests and agreement between my participants and me. For example, two students labelled as learning disabled from School One asked that I always interview them together, in pairs, which I did.

I gained additional information about what was happening and why through my informal interactions and conversations with the students and teachers during school hours. My informal meetings with them helped me to gain preliminary information and then probe it in the formal interviews,

especially those with the teachers. The interviews with participating teachers took place mostly after school hours and each one took approximately 60 minutes. My formal interviews with participating students were held after school; each lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. In general, my interviews with the students were relatively informal way because this approach allowed them to be receptive to my questions and gave me on-going opportunities to build rapport and trust, thus encouraging the students to be more candid and to speak as their natural selves without the pressure to look “good”. My informal interviews happened during break times or during breaks before the next lesson. I wrote notes to record their responses after I talked to them. I found the informal interviews worked well for gaining students’ perspectives, understandings, and experiences of their classroom lives, as well as of their learning and interactions with others.

Most formal interviews were audiotaped using an audio recorder once I received permissions from my participants to record them. The interviews were transcribed literally in Indonesian and local languages with the help of a research assistant. The assistant helped me transcribe the interviews because of my intense data collection schedule, which required me to spend most days at school, doing the data collection by myself. However, I checked my research assistant’s transcripts by listening to the interview recordings, comparing them with the transcriptions, and then revising and completing

any parts of them where some words were indistinct because of environmental noise. This process of reading through my transcripts and listening to the recordings several times over allowed me to “hear” my participants, both verbally and non-verbally. The length of the transcripts varied from between three and eight pages (single spaced) for each student and from between 25 and 49 pages (single spaced) for each teacher.

Once the interviews had been transcribed, I gave the participating teachers and the peers the transcriptions of their interviews to read through, a process known as member checking. Each of my learning-disabled participants and I read their respective interview transcripts together. I told all my participants that they could make changes and delete any information they were reluctant to share in the study.

3.9. Challenges with data collection methods

I realised that my presence for seven months in the two schools could influence my relationships with my participants and the rest of the school communities. I was aware that the data resulting from the field might create a halo effect for me and my participants that could influence our relationships (Patton, 1999). I found it challenging to be neutral and impartial during my participant observations and interviews within the contexts where I encountered vulnerable students, such as the students labelled as learning

disabled who interacted daily with me and the participating teachers. Because my own preconceptions and assumptions related to the topic and participants being studied could influence the way I approached them (Agee, 2009; Patton, 1999), clarifying my presumptions in my research journals became a continuous part of my reflections on the data arising out of my observations and interviews.

I learned to be flexible with my participants in terms of the timing and intensity of the interviews. I realised that all my participating teachers were busy with their teaching and other administrative responsibilities. It was a common practice in both schools to assign teachers other roles that seemed to be time consuming and demanding for them. I prepared myself for the likelihood of a scheduled interview being cancelled and became ready with my notes and audio recorder for any opportunity to do some interviews.

Sometimes, I became overly attached to pursuing a certain topic in an interview because I had determined in advance what information I wanted to get from the field rather than being open to all possible answers and exploring them accordingly. Realising that the constraints of my assumptions and research questions were not only giving me more information on the topics I was interested in rather than other potential topics but also influencing how I was running the interviews, I tried to minimise these

problems by consciously trying to be more open and to “follow” my participants’ responses to my questions or observations. In doing this, I hoped to obtain the rich data that would be especially valuable for further exploration.

3.10. Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis is a process of organising data in a way that communicates to others what has been learned from the raw data produced from the field work. This interpretative-descriptive approach allows researchers to make sense of the social world by portraying pictures of the participants’ experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

In keeping with this approach, I undertook an inductive thematic analysis of the data derived from my participants’ views and not from my own conceptions. The inductive thematic analysis is appropriate for identifying themes in the data, and in capturing patterns of themes that recur across the data (Allen, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dahan-Oliel, Shikako-Thomas & Majnemer, 2012). The data I collected were mainly of the qualitative type, comprising field notes and interview transcripts. The data captured not only my participants’ views, but also their feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge. I translated some of the transcripts into English before analysing them and then worked through the following steps:

1. *Familiarised myself with the data:* During this phase, I read and reread the transcripts of my data and noted down initial ideas.
2. *Generated initial codes:* I identified and coded the interesting features systematically across the whole data set.
3. *Searched for themes and subthemes:* During this phase, I gathered together all data corresponding to each potential theme.
4. *Reviewed the themes:* I checked whether the themes aligned with the coded extracts and the entire data set. I then generated a thematic map of my analysis to date.
5. *Defined and named themes:* As part of the ongoing analysis, I refined each theme and generated clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. *Produced the report:* In this final phase, I selected vivid and compelling examples (extracts) from my data, analysed the final selected extracts, and related them back to my research questions and literature to produce a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data told.

By working through these steps, I developed more than 100 separate codes made up of keywords and phrases (for example, “barrier to learning”, “ability grouping”, and “teaching styles”). I then further categorised my data in accordance with codes I designated as primary and secondary, and through that process I was finally able to reduce the codes into 16 categories, which I

used to identify emerging themes (Rossetti, 2012). More detail on how I developed the codes and themes are described in detail in the next subsection.

3.10.1. Coding process

Coding started when I generated initial codes based on notes I took while I read and reread my transcriptions. I used a combination of software and manual methods to generate the codes. The software I used was the software NVivo, designed for use with qualitative data. Several reasons informed my decision to use NVivo for my study. Firstly, NVivo provided a management tool that helped me organise the enormous amount of data I had. It offered me a range of functions with which I could organise the data, including simple codes and retrieval procedures. Secondly, NVivo provided several options for storing my various types of data, such as text, graphics, photographs, and audio. Thirdly, NVivo also helped me to write, revise, adjust, and store codes in a manageable way (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Maietta, 2008). While NVivo helps with data organisation and management, it does not have the facility to analyse or interpret data (Seidman, 2013).

I was mindful that I was the main actor in the process of analysing my data set, as well as the one who would judge what was significant in it. Therefore, in the middle of using NVivo, I decided to back it up manually. My decision to apply two ways of analysing my data was mainly motivated

by two reasons. Firstly, dealing with word-based information, such as interviews and field notes, requires frequent and intense engagement with both in order to make sense of them. Secondly, because I wanted to minimise the distance between myself and my data, I needed to understand and immerse myself in the contexts where the interviews took place and the field notes were generated (Seidman, 2013). If I did not do this as I worked through the immense bulk of data, I risked not only overlooking information valuable for helping me understand the contextual frames but also experiencing a “coding trap” (Seidman, 2013, p. 134). The process I used when manual coding involved making tables in Word documents, and then cutting and pasting the excerpts from the interviews and field notes into the coded categories in the tables.

3.10.2. Finding themes

I developed the codes by highlighting key ideas in the various sections (that is, words, phrases, sentences, and whole paragraphs) of the transcriptions, and then applying to them inductive codes grounded in my participants’ responses. I then searched for connections among the different codes in order to generate categories and themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Ignatow & Mihalcea, 2017). Strauss and Corbin (1990) consider this process of grouping concepts (or codes) to be the same as categorising. As previously noted, the

initial process involved reading and re-reading the transcripts and field notes to familiarise myself with the data. The process of rechecking the transcripts and translations from Indonesians to English was an especially demanding part of this work. However, I found it worth doing because it greatly furthered my familiarity with the data and therefore enhanced drawing meaning from that information and finding emergent themes within it.

When using NVivo 11 and its updated version (NVivo 12 Plus) software, I stored codes in nodes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). I limited the number of nodes derived from my data into fewer than 100 to minimise confusion and avoid paying too much attention to small details. During the analysis process, I also considered the number of sections under each code, and remained mindful that certain sections could belong in different nodes. The use of co-occurring codes was one of the compelling features of my analysis work because it let me look at all quotations coded into two or more different codes and to consider how these codes interacted. Throughout the analysis, I renamed, recoded, deleted, and combined the codes, sometimes breaking them into smaller subcategories. As soon as I completed my coding of the interview transcripts, I applied the same treatment to my field notes. My manual method of coding themes was to use printed versions of the interview transcripts and field notes and then highlight certain texts or

sections of them according to the codes before transferring the coding to a computer file.

Because I was working with such a large data set, I made separate versions of my theme-coded analyses as they progressed and backed up each version by giving it its own name and then sorting the versions in YY-MM-DD order (Lewins & Silver, 2007). This way of managing the data prevented me from becoming confused with earlier versions yet also enabled me to track the progress of my codings as they continuously developed and changed during the analyses. My first version of my coding work (LD2018-03-09) consisted of 109 codes, the second version (LD2018-03-12) of 95 codes, the third (LD2018-04-01) 55 codes, the fourth (LD2018-05-01) 33 codes, and the fifth (LD2018-05-09) 16 codes. The number of codes reduced as I redefined them to achieve ever more specific concepts. For example, I merged the original codes of “characteristics, limited ability, and academic difficulties” into a new code “understanding learning disabilities”. I wrote against the name of each code what it meant and then applied the codes to my data and looked for emerging themes relevant to each code meant. The names and definitions I gave to the 16 codes follow:

1. *Access and achievement*: Teachers’ opportunities for students labelled as learning disabled to have access to the curriculum.

2. Beliefs and attitudes: Teachers' and students' reactions toward students labelled as learning disabled' academic performance.
3. *Stigma*: Teachers' and students' negative behaviours toward students labelled as learning disabled.
4. *Ability-based learning*: Teachers' and students' emphases on students' abilities to meet the demands of the tasks and teachers' expectations.
5. *Teacher-centred approach*: Teachers determine, decide, direct, control how knowledge/ideas/responses are delivered and communicated.
6. *Understanding learning disabilities*: Teachers' and students' perceptions about students labelled as learning disabled.
7. *Learning and participation*: The engagement or disengagement of students labelled as learning disabled with respect to learning experiences, with those experiences nominated by either a teacher or an individual.
8. *Ability grouping*: Teachers' strategies for enhancing the achievement of students labelled as learning disabled on the basis of their abilities.
9. *Emphasis on differences*: The ways teachers and students make disabilities visible.
10. *Assessment*: Grade-based evaluation to measure academic achievement.
11. *Academic failure*: Learning results that do not meet teachers' expectations.

12. *Teacher–student relationships*: Learning-based interactions between teachers and students labelled as learning disabled.
13. *Working collaboratively*: Strategies to assist students labelled as learning disabled when doing tasks.
14. *Low expectations*: Teachers’ and students’ negative expectations of progress/achievement by students labelled as learning disabled during learning.
15. *Classroom practices*: Ways of teaching and learning orchestrated mostly by teachers in everyday classrooms.
16. *Limited interactions*: Limited intensity and frequency of interactions between students labelled as learning disabled and peers during various learning activities.

My next step was to sort these 16 themes into similar conceptual groupings. This process led to the development of three main themes: construction of learning disabilities; classroom practices; and learning and participation. The first theme, “understanding learning disabilities”, comprised codes such as beliefs and attitudes, stigma, understanding learning disabilities, low expectations, academic failure, and assessment. “Classroom practices” included codes such as classroom practices, ability-grouping, ability-based learning, teacher–student relationships, and teacher-centred approach. The remaining codes, grouped under “learning and participation”,

consisted of codes relating to emphasised differences, access and achievement, learning and participation, limited interactions, and working collaboratively.

At a later time, I used the same procedure to analyse any data that I had not included under one of these themes. Data still left over after this step were not analysed further.

3.11. Trustworthiness and credibility of my research

As I recorded above, I assessed the trustworthiness of my data analysis by subjecting it to member checks because I needed to fully consider the multiple perspectives held by my various participants and to understand them within their social and political contexts.

My first check required me to assess my position as a researcher. Even though I also work in the field of education, I realised that my research focus stemmed from my psychology background, and it was my familiarity with the psychosocial aspect of students labelled as learning disabled that introduced me to the concept of inclusion. My interest in undertaking research in this area gave me valuable opportunities to engage with schools potentially dealing with the issue I wanted to investigate.

During my research, I acted as both an insider and an outsider researcher. As an insider my position was that of an Indonesian, the same ethnicity as my participants. This factor gave me confidence when I interacted with them because I was familiar with the local language and sociocultural aspects. It was therefore relatively effortless for me to adjust to everyday school life. However, my presence as an outsider researcher and my background in education background had the potential for power-based relationships, especially between me and the teachers. The fact that I had no affiliation with the schools where I undertook my research and did not visit the schools regularly minimised my interactions with the schools' stakeholders.

Being an outsider researcher actually benefited me in two ways. Firstly, I experienced no conflict of interest with any school stakeholder since I had no affiliation with any education board within the local district. This situation allowed teachers to behave as naturally as possible during my visit. Secondly, I could enter the field sites with no prejudice, as I had no knowledge of political issues relating to each school; nor did I have knowledge of its norms and its unwritten rules. This gave me greater opportunity to undertake my research in a naturalistic setting.

I was furthermore mindful of the impossibility of ignoring my own beliefs, values, and experiences that would become an inseparable part of my research. I knew that my presence as a researcher could affect my relationships with my participants, so I endeavoured to present only my participants' views, values and beliefs, even though any or all of these might have contradicted my own.

Another point I needed to consider was that the amount of time I spent observing and interviewing my participants in the schools might make people feel uncomfortable about my presence and could result in my participants giving “normative” and “pleasant” responses to my questions rather than presenting their own views and experiences. To minimise this possibility, I endeavoured to position myself in the role of “friend” to the students. This role made it easier for me to interact with them in the most authentic way possible (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017) because it meant I did not have to behave as an authoritative or dominant figure or to monitor their behaviour or assist with their work (Schnorr, 1990).

By minimising my adult-role, I was more likely to develop and build equal relationships with students. However, in Indonesia, building equal relationships between students and adults is not seem a common practice (Zulfikar, 2013). While I did not ignore this cultural matter, I still felt in

necessary to argue in favour of minimising distance between me and my participating students helped if I were to reduce the issue of power and gain their trust (Cullen, 2005). Their acceptance and trust in me increased when I did not inform their teachers of incidents in the classrooms, inform their teachers, such as making noise or generally misbehaving. By proving that I would not inform on them, some students became so comfortable with me that they did not mind sharing their secrets with me.

The second strategy I used to establish trustworthiness was that of maintaining credibility. According to Morrow (2005), credibility aims to address issues about the rigor of the research process and the procedures for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and sharing the findings of the research with its participants. Credibility is closely related to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research (Morrow, 2005). To achieve credibility for my research, I prolonged my engagement with my participants in the two schools. I had begun visiting the schools in January 2017 with the aims of familiarising myself with the nature of the two schools and making the school communities accustomed to my presence. I explained my position as a researcher, university lecturer, and counsellor from a middle-class family to my participants and have done the same when writing this thesis.

When presenting my findings in various forums, including this thesis, I have remained aware of “disclosure and betrayal” issues regarding my participants’ views. This awareness was also strongly evident as I collected, transcribed, analysed, interpreted, and reported the findings. I have at all times been fully committed to maintaining my participants’ confidentiality and anonymity.

To further enhance the credibility of my work, I have provided thorough descriptions of my research processes and the outcomes, and given my participants in-depth descriptions of the content of my interview transcripts and field notes. These descriptions contain rich details about what, where, and how my participants experienced situations relating to learning disabilities in classroom settings. I have additionally utilised triangulation to maintain the credibility of my research (Thomas, 2006). Triangulation is a process where the researchers draws on multiple perspectives to clarify meaning and understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Flick, 2018) and to verify interpretation of the data (Stake, 2000). In this study, data were triangulated across observations, interviews, and participants. I also discussed my data and themes with my supervisors during our meetings, and with other scholars during my participation in conferences. These discussions helped me to reflect on and minimise my personal bias and presumptions.

The third strategy was member checking. Member checking is a means of achieving and maintaining trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research by inviting research participants to check for accuracy, challenge interpretations, and find results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Reilly, 2013; Thomas, 2006). I gave copies of the interview transcripts to my participating teachers and students. I asked them to read their own transcripts thoroughly and to give me feedback on their transcripts, including adding or omitting any words or sentences that did not reflect their views or what they had meant to say.

My participants provided cooperative responses and agreed to what was written. Aware that my participants might be under pressure to please me or to express agreement rather than disagreement to please me because they did not want to disappoint me, I decided to use a dialogical approach for the checking. For example, I used a conversational approach when I asked the students to check their transcripts. Because their transcripts were short, they and I read the transcripts together. Sometimes they commented about some of the detail in the transcripts that was typically unrelated to the spoken content of the transcripts, such as yawning or laughing during the interviews. I am convinced that this collaborative approach to member checking the transcripts promoted positive connections and understanding between me, the researcher, and the students (Reilly, 2013).

I did not apply the same treatment to the teachers, realising lack of time and space might prevent them from reading their transcripts thoroughly. I therefore provided them with a longish period of time – between a week and two weeks – to make comments on their transcripts. I wanted to ensure they had enough time to communicate their understanding of and approval for what they had verbally expressed without the pressure of time constraints.

The last strategy I used to achieve trustworthiness was reflexivity. Knowing that my beliefs and assumptions about disability could influence and therefore interfere with my framing and interpreting (as a researcher) of disability during my daily interactions with the participants. Being reflexive is critical in an ethnographic study (Cocks, 2008) for two main reasons in my case: (a) the need to be aware of different cultures and values when making choices about my research topic and taking into account my participants' views; and (b) the need to be attuned to my professional/academic presumptions and cultural prejudices (Newton, 2009). I avoided assumptions, such as one assuming that my participating students would be exposed to the same culture as the participating teachers. The use of reflexivity clarified my own biases and any underlying presumptions that could adversely influence how I implemented the research process.

3.12. Ethical issues

I knew that working with teachers and students in a school (School One) I had collaborated with on prior occasions could be both interesting and challenging. Securing approval from the school had been relatively effortless, and the new school head welcomed me to do research at the school, as did the head at School Two. I had visited School One in relation to a service project for the university where I was working at that time, and while the school head had changed by the time of my doctoral research, I still remembered some the teachers I met. I was surprised when I found they still remembered me. It brought my memory back to what I had done long ago there. It was because of their cooperation during the project that started becoming engaged with the issue of disability, particularly students labelled as learning disabled.

On returning to the school, I was fearful that the teachers might expect me to do something for the school, especially when they knew I would be there for an extended period of time. My familiarity with School One could potentially have raised some ethical issues regarding the research I undertook. To limit this possibility, I maintained awareness of elements of subjectivity that might influence my analysis and interpretation of my data by writing what these might be, such as teachers' expectations and my presumptions and discomforts (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

My involvement in School Two started when my friend suggested I visit the school where she worked. Being at a school that I was not familiar with gave me more opportunity to explore this school, but I suspected the prior knowledge about the school I received from my friend might influence my subjectivity regarding the school. During my time in School Two, my interactions with teachers and students were frequently intense, as they often involved me in school activities. One such included accompanying teachers and some students to join a boy and girl Scouts' contest.

3.12.1. Informed consent

Receiving informed consent from parents was my first challenge for this study. Unlike Western societies where human rights issues are frequently promoted and highlighted frequently, we might assume that getting informed consent from parents and caregivers as children's guardians would be less troublesome in developing countries. In Indonesia, parental consent is likely to be given on the basis of good relationships between parents and the school their children are attending. One indication of that relationship is how immediately parents and caregivers respond to a teacher's or school head's invitation to attend a parent-teacher meeting.

During a pre-arranged meeting with all of the parents of the students I hoped would participate in my research, I explained to them what the

research involved, and asked them for their approval to gain information from their children. I also provided them with information about the study on the informed consent form. However, I found each of them immediately put their signature to the form after just skimming its content. I expected them to carefully read each statement written on the form, but quickly realised that the “good intentions” of informed consent do not always meet with reality. None of the parents asked questions about my study or the information stated on the consent form. I was left unsure about whether they understood or trusted me wholeheartedly, yet they gave me their approval and full assurance that their children would willingly cooperate with me. I, therefore, before the meeting ended, decided to simplify my language and to again explain and ask for consent. I also avoided terms that were likely to be unfamiliar to the parents.

After the meeting, all of the parents still returned the consent forms with signed approval for me to work with their children. It is possible that the parents’ ready agreement to include their children in my study might have been because of concern about what they thought was expected of them. I suspected that parents had been unlikely to refuse my request because the school heads had approved my research plan, and therefore felt obliged to include their children as participants in my study.

The participating teachers also gave me their informed consent when I met with them collectively at each school. It was apparent to me that they knew the two school heads had agreed to let me conduct my study in their schools and had signed their forms on that basis. Worried that the issue of autonomy might be at play here because they felt they had no choice over participating in my study (Newton & Appiah-Poku, 2007), I decided to approach the teachers individually outside the meeting to minimise pressure from the school heads and allow them to make informed decisions.

The issue of autonomy was also evident when I approached the students for their consent. Because the class teachers nominated most of the students who could potentially participate in my study, I knew these students might not fully understand the purpose of the research. I used a personal approach to get to know these students before gaining their consent and starting to interview them. While building rapport in this way took time, doing activities together and chatting with them helped me to engage in frequent discussions wherein they could ask me as many questions as they wanted about my study. It was my responsibility to assure that their participation in my study was voluntary and based on their understanding of the purpose of the study (Okello et al., 2013).

3.12.2. Anonymity

The class teachers provided me with the information on which of their students had learning difficulties and which did not. In each teacher's class there was at least one student with learning difficulties. Therefore, when the school head asked me about my potential student participants during the collective meetings with the teachers, some of them told me that they probably had the students I wanted to talk to; they even mentioned the names of the students and commented on their behaviour. The teachers were able to identify and talk about these students either because they had taught them in a previous or current class or gained information about them during conversations in the teachers' staffroom. As soon as they mentioned the students' names, they provided me with some evidence as to why I should include them on my potential participants' list.

This situation made clear to me that I would find it difficult to make my student participants anonymous because the teachers and other students would easily recognise them. However, to minimise potential harm for my student participants, I kept their information anonymous in all ways possible. For example, I never discussed any with the teachers and other students, the information each participating student gave me through interviews, drawings, and photographs. I was therefore pleased that right through the data collection stage, none of the teachers and other students asked me about that

information. Rather, they usually provided me with details about participating students' behaviours, and continued to do so I even after I ended my data collection.

3.12.3. Role of the researcher: Being in distinctive positions

Being familiar with school situations allowed me to share some common ground with the students and, whenever possible, have them share experiences with one another. Such activities provided another means of building rapport and trust with the students. In addition, having experienced doing various activities with children both inside and outside school settings helped me interact with the participating students and gain understanding of their spheres of interest. I mention these aspects of my research because it is important to note how my participants and I positioned my roles in the research sites.

During the data collection, I experienced the different roles my participants assigned me and constructed for me. The students approached me in a generally "egalitarian" way. They ascribed to me the role of a friend, while the teachers and other school staff positioned me in a place of authority, as an "expert" and as "a substitute teacher", evident when they requested me to act as an assisting teacher when they had urgent administrative work to do. Such times usually saw them leaving the students

with me for one to two hours. In one of the schools, I was even asked to help the students with their English.

I tried to explain to the teachers that my role was solely to observe and interact with the students, yet the teachers or school heads quite frequently school positioned me in a teacher role, which was the opposite of the position I had planned for myself in advance – that of a non-authoritative person. There were times when I thought that it was entirely unsuitable for me to be positioned in an authoritative role that had the risk of distancing me from the students.

I ask Nadia, a girl sitting in front of me. I should know without telling her that the questions are a lot, but anyway I keep asking her, “A lot of writing, huh?” She nods. Meanwhile, most of the students sit and write from their chairs. Three students are standing and starting to talk with other students; around five to six students are back and forth from the toilet. I ask one of them once they are back in the class, “Have you finished your work?” He says, ‘Still writing it’ and I ask them all to continue their work. “Please continue doing it.” *I feel like I am like their teacher, asking them what to do and not to do. I feel a bit awkward now, placing myself being a researcher and a substitute “teacher”. I keep myself calm and try to be as neutral as possible. It’s not easy because I think the teacher may expect me to act like her, having control over the students [emphasis intentional].* (Field notes, School One)

However, being in two distinctive positions, as a participant-observer and a substitute teacher, did end up presenting advantages, such as giving me opportunities to build more trusted-based relationships with the students.

Therefore, when placed in the role of substitute teacher, instead of performing my authority over them, I engaged with them in a participatory role that included doing the learning tasks, playing with them, and talking alongside them.

3.13. Chapter summary

My study took a qualitative research approach because it focuses on helping researchers gain understandings from rich data and the meaning of complex experiences from, in my situation, the different perspectives of my participants. Ethical issues related with informed consent, anonymity, and role were among the considerations I had to address during the data collection process.

The next three chapters present the findings of my study. The chapter immediately following this current one, Chapter Four, focuses on the first theme “construction of learning disabilities”. Here I discuss how the students labelled as learning disabled were constructed as such in their learning contexts. The discussion draws on the perspectives of the teachers and students to show how students labelled as learning disabled tend to be presented in various learning situations.

In Chapter Five, I set out and explain the finding relating to my second theme, which is the classroom practices that hinder or support learning. These

practices include ability grouping practices and the strategies teachers use when involving students labelled as learning disabled in learning experiences or excluding them from those experiences.

The third theme, covered in Chapter Six, looks at barriers to participation and learning for students labelled as learning disabled. I explore the various classroom practices that potentially inhibit participation and learning of students labelled as learning disabled. As I endeavour to make clear, students labelled as learning disabled are likely to be excluded and struggle to develop membership with other students, outcomes that can discourage the implementation of the inclusive values that uphold the values of participation and support for all students.

Chapter Four: Understandings of learning disabilities

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the everyday practices in the classrooms at the two purposefully selected primary schools in Indonesia where the four learning-disabled students with disabilities who participated in my study were being taught. This chapter responds to the two main questions and the first sub-question of this study in relation to teachers' and students' understandings of learning disabilities and how their understandings are played out in day-to-day classroom activities. I first present the teachers' and students' constructions of learning disabilities and the implications of being defined as learning disabled. In the second part of the chapter, I present the teachers' and students' perceptions of the students labelled as learning disabled.

I used Smith and Barr's (2008) *learning equals being taught* model to help me examine how learning disabilities were being constructed in the everyday classroom life of the two schools, and the consequences that these constructions were having on students' learning and teachers' pedagogical practices.

4.2. Learning as teachers' transmission of knowledge

Schools play an important role in developing inclusive societies (Booth, 2005, 2011; Carrington et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2005). Teachers have to accommodate the various aspects of student diversity, such as ability, socioeconomic background, and gender. To effectively respond to student diversity, schools need to be supportive learning environments, and to move from teacher-based learning into community-based learning by involving others. In this regard, Smith and Barr (2008) offer three alternative models of teaching and learning, each of which draws from a sociocultural perspective of curriculum and pedagogy. It is their first model of teaching and learning – *learning equals being taught* – that informs my analysis in this chapter.

The *learning equals being taught* model characterises the teacher's role constructed as expert, and the curriculum being presented as fact. Learning is therefore seen as a knowledge-transmission activity, predominantly cognitive and individual-based, and affected by the assumed fixed nature of ability. This model aligns with traditional educational practice that gives strong emphasis to academic achievement.

In my study, teachers' and students' constructions of learning disabilities were dominated or influenced by the view that learning disabilities have a cognitive basis and are therefore an intrinsic aspect of the

individual learner. My study showed that the teachers involved in it used certain indicators to identify students who fitted the label of “learning-disabled”. Most of the participating teachers maintained that students who did not meet the KKM criteria (see Chapter One) had learning problems and limited abilities. For example, when I asked one of the teachers, Lestari (pseudonym) how she recognised students who were having learning problems, she replied, “Their grades have been below the minimum standard ...” (Interview, Lestari, School One).

Teachers in Indonesia use the KKM criteria at the start of each semester (Direktorat Pembinaan Sekolah Dasar Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2016). These provide teachers with a standardised assessment tool to evaluate and categorise students’ abilities based solely on their grades. The criteria stress students’ academic achievement and the cognitive aspect of learning. The criteria categorise students as competent or non-competent learners, and this academic-based categorisation defines “who” each student is. This finding from my study suggests that using the KKM criteria has become a legitimised way for teachers in Indonesia to determine whether a student is able to learn or not learn. The criteria have also become a guide for teachers when determining whether students have achieved certain knowledge and skills specified in the curriculum. These uses of the criteria closely fit with Smith and Barr’s (2008) *learning equals being taught* model,

not only because it highlights learning as cognitive activity, but also because it values student learning in terms of whether students can demonstrate what the teachers have taught them. Thus, learning is seen as having been achieved when students meet the academic demands of the curriculum.

It is within contexts where students are unlikely to meet these academic standards that learning disabilities became salient (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Skidmore, 2004). How learning is evaluated suggests that learning and learning disabilities are situated within activities and educational practices which inform teachers that some students are less able than the others. The implication of this situation is that teachers can potentially overemphasise the academic aspect of schooling by using a quantification process to describe students' learning progress and from there determine and justify students' competence. When achievement equates with ability, a grade becomes visible evidence of ability. Grades are used to communicate students' level of ability to teachers, which then influence how they teach and treat their students. As Hart, Dixon, Drummond, and McIntyre (2004) point out, when teachers overrate ability as the main indicator of learning, they are particularly likely to use ability to categorise students.

In the participating schools, students labelled as learning disabled were indeed viewed as having low ability and their academic achievement was

typically lower than that of the peers. One teacher's belief that students labelled as learning disabled rarely make progress because "they can't catch up" (Interview, Lestari, School One) was influenced by her perception of these students' limited abilities. As Christensen (1999) shows, this perspective on the part of teachers can place such students in situations that contribute to them experiencing on-going failure. It also means peers tend to be viewed as able to succeed because they have the ability to do so.

When teaching their students, the participating teachers in the two case study schools had opportunities to measure students' abilities through the learning activities assigned to them. Measurement techniques included asking students questions from the textbook and/or on the whiteboard, giving them opportunity to do maths tasks at the front of the class, having them discuss a group task, and asking them to read a sentence. A few students, however, did not respond to these requests, including two of the students labelled as learning disabled, namely Santi and Nining (pseudonyms). When I asked Lestari how she involved Santi and Nining in responding to these requests, she said:

I wait for them to answer the question ... I observe them, they can't, they can't do it, when I ask them, and they only say, "What is it? What's this?" They are incapable... It's quite different if the students don't have learning problems; when they are stimulated ... given clues... they can! But not with these learning-disabled ones! (Interview, Lestari, School One)

The interactions among Lestari, Santi, and Nining evident in this extract can be interpreted several ways. Lestari emphasised that Santi and Nining had limited capability to understand the lesson through her comment “... they can’t, they can’t do it”, indicating that her focus was on what Santi and Nining could not do. Lestari might therefore have thought that teaching Santi and Nining would not be effective because she viewed them as unable to learn. Lestari’s comment retained the idea that learning equals being taught. In other words, Santi’s and Nining’s aptitude for learning was based on abilities that Lestari perceived as fixed and unchangeable. For her, the two students’ abilities “won’t change”. Her belief that students labelled as learning disabled’s learning would show “no progress” was influenced by the teacher’s perception of these students’ abilities. When she saw that these students could not keep up with learning demands, she placed them at risk of being left out of learning opportunities because she had determined what learning is and how it should manifest. Lestari’s comments about Santa and Nining show that because she had already been affected by her perceived identity of students labelled as learning disabled, she assumed Santi and Nining had “severe learning problems” that affected how they practised (exhibited) what she wanted her students to learn.

Smith and Barr’s (2008) model of *learning equals being taught* includes the premise that learning involves increased understanding. For

Lestari, the two students' inability to produce a correct response was evidence that confirmed them as learning disabled, but what was not clear was whether they could not understand the lesson or if they could not remember the key part of the lesson. Or perhaps they were not certain what Lestari wanted, so they avoided the task to minimise making mistakes. As Dudley-Marling (2004) points out, the complex interaction between the learning task, the situation in which it is done, and teacher–student relationships play influential roles in the construction of learning disabilities

The participating teachers and the peers also mentioned lack of basic skills as indicative of difficulties in learning. For example, Annisa (pseudonym; a subject teacher), when asked to describe Santi, highlighted this feature:

“She couldn't write. She wrote, but [she] didn't know what she wrote.” (Interview, Annisa, School One)

Here, Annisa's identification of Santi as learning-disabled was situated within the context that required Santi to achieve academic skills. As such, the teacher could justify the presence of learning disabilities on the basis that Santi could not demonstrate an expected skill, in this case, writing. In this instance, being learning disabled was understood as having deficits in academic skills. Endah (pseudonym; a teacher) likewise explained that the

basic problem for Wawan and Putri (pseudonyms; students labelled as learning disabled) was their inability to demonstrate strong basic skills in reading, writing, and calculating. Endah believed these difficulties inhibited their overall learning:

“Whatever you give to them ... it won’t work.” (Interview, Endah, School Two)

The teachers’ comments in the above extracts clearly show the role of the teacher in identifying students labelled as learning disabled by highlighting these students’ lack of basic skills as evidence of them having learning problems. The beliefs of these two participating teachers also suggest that students labelled as learning disabled are vulnerable to negative evaluations that position them as failing academically. However, the point that I want to consider here is that the teachers judged the students’ abilities according to their already developed assumption that students’ competencies and learning progress are determined by their ability to master basic skills. Because of their conviction that students labelled as learning disabled lack basic skills, they believed that the students labelled as learning disabled in their classrooms could never “catch up”. The teachers thus tended to see basic skills as prerequisites for learning advanced skills. The implication of this perception is that students who experience difficulties in these specific academic areas are likely to be regarded as lacking intelligence in general

academic areas (Denhart, 2008; Higgins, Raskind, Goldberg, & Herman, 2002). This possibility indicates that teachers' judgements of students labelled as learning disabled's basic skills can have a considerable influence on all their learning experiences (Kaiser, Retelsdorf, Südkamp, & Möller, 2013) and thereby potentially exclude them from assessing the curriculum (Florian & Black-Hawkins. 2011).

4.3. Learning and failure

Failure to perform well in learning areas is the criterion by the teachers who participated in my study assessed the students labelled as learning disabled as incompetent learners. The way in which failure was represented in the schools appeared to be legitimised by the presence of teachers who had authority to make judgements about what students labelled as learning disabled cannot do and will not do, implying that the root of learning difficulties lies within the individual student (Georgiou, Christou, Stavriniades, & Panaoura, 2002; Woodcock & Jiang, 2018). Students were viewed as being the ones responsible for their ability to learn no matter what effort teachers put into their teaching. Consequently, teachers assumed that those students whom they saw as having high ability levels would learn, make progress, and achieve better than the students they saw as having lower

ability, a stance that reflects deterministic beliefs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Most of the participating teachers stated that students labelled as learning disabled were unlikely to make learning progress, indicating their assumption of the fixed and innate nature of learning disabilities. They saw learning ability as the main factor in students labelled as learning disabled' lack of achievement, as evident from Annisa's description of Nining, one of the students labelled as learning disabled:

“She has limited ability, that's all she can do. She has been like that for [a] long [time] ... Nining has limited ability. No matter your effort, she will not change because her ability is stuck! It will be a waste if we push her ... she can't.”
(Interview, Annisa, School One)

Annisa was identifying ability not only as a determinant of what students could do but also as a predictor of their future learning. She seemed to believe that learning disabilities are fixed and innate, implying that students labelled as learning disabled are likely to fail because their teachers cannot “change” or “control” their abilities. Annisa's comment also suggests that because any effort a teacher makes to “push” students labelled as learning disabled will be “a waste” because there is actually nothing teachers can do to support students labelled as learning disabled; once again, failure to learn is

the result of individual pathology (Christensen, 1999; Skidmore, 2002; Vlachou, Eleftheriadou, & Metallidou, 2014).

Annisa's apparent conviction that ability level determines how well a student learns aligns with commentary from Hart et al. (2004) and Florian and Linklater (2010), who suggest that many teachers think ability is the main factor in determining whether learning occurs or not. Ability and learning are therefore seen as interdependent. Annisa was confident, not only that students labelled as learning disabled are less likely than other students to experience learning progress because of their persistent failure, but also that these students could ultimately achieve based on her prediction of their low level of knowledge. Teaching students labelled as learning disabled would make no difference to that predicted outcome. Such a perception, grounded in a deficit belief about learning disabilities (Ferri, Connor, Solis, Valle, & Volpitta, 2005), could create further dysfunction for students labelled as learning disabled should effort be made to remedy their learning difficulties, because the remedy is most likely to focus on the perceived disabilities and to disregard other aspects of the students' identities (Peña, Stapleton, & Schaffer, 2016).

By emphasising these students' lack of ability, the participating teachers tended to believe that "no matter how hard you try to change and

support” students labelled as learning disabled, the efforts will not “work” to improve the abilities of these students. Any efforts they (the teachers) used to support students labelled as learning disabled could never have optimum outcomes because there was no changing these students. Because the students labelled as learning disabled were to blame for their learning disabilities, teachers could absolve themselves of responsibility to promote those students’ learning (Hart et al., 2004).

The teachers’ contribution to creating and maintaining failure for students labelled as learning disabled seemed to be overlooked by the participating teachers. An example of this occurred when one of them (Aminah; pseudonym), while talking to her students, made a point about a learning-disabled student:

After writing the questions on the whiteboard, the teacher walks around the class, students copy the questions, saying ... “I know who understands and who doesn’t [understand]. I can see clearly from your faces ... if Putri can do maths, and it’s correct ... I’ll be suspicious of her.” (Field note, School Two)

Aminah’s comment about Putri indicates Aminah thought Putri’s problem with learning maths was situated within her. It was apparent that Aminah did not expect to see Putri’s progress, let alone believe that Putri was able to achieve. Aminah’s comments about Putri during my interview with Aminah confirmed her attitude towards Putri. At one point she said “... time has

proven that Putri always fails”, showing that Aminah had developed the conviction that Putri would never succeed. Putri’s consistent failure was embedded in Aminah’s routine teaching practice; if Putri showed any achievement inconsistent with Aminah’s expectation of her, then Putri must have done something else to have performed the maths task correctly, cheating perhaps. So, no matter what Putri did, Aminah had bedded in Putri’s identity as learning disabled.

In classroom tasks requiring a high demand of cognitive skill, Putri’s difficulty was clearly evident for the teacher, and it became important information communicating Putri’s learning disabilities. Being “suspicious” of any progress Putri might make in her learning demonstrated again reinforced her teacher’s view that Putri’s problem was an intrinsic part of her and so she would never catch up with other students. Constructions of learning disabilities as fixed, innate disabilities can have the significant consequence of allowing others to determine who is not performing as expected in the classroom. Such a determination is typically made and maintained by teachers who have been constructed as the experts in the learning field (Smith & Barr, 2008). Aminah’s comment demonstrated her assumption that students labelled as learning disabled can never respond adequately to any learning information that might influence the teacher’s effort to support these students to succeed (Georgiou et al., 2002; Vlachou et

al., 2014). It appears that a teacher's existing beliefs can therefore communicate and signify not only the achievement gap between students labelled as learning disabled and peers, but also pedagogical practice that reinforces inequality for students labelled as learning disabled. While such beliefs can undermine these students labelled as learning disabled's potential to improve, they also point to the contribution of the school in creating and maintaining the disabling practices (Heyd-Metzuyanim, 2013; Varenne & McDermott, 1999) evident in Aminah's classroom.

The peers in this study echoed Aminah's comment that she would be surprised if students such as Putri succeeded in doing academic tasks. During my observations, the participating teachers often assigned students with homework and class exercises and then discussed the students' performance on their homework and exercises in the classrooms. The teachers also often had the students self-mark this work according to the teachers' marking schedules. The teachers would ask the students to calculate their scores and then one by one tell the class their score out loud. On one such occasion, Santi got a high mark for her maths homework. When Santi told everyone her mark, her peer said, "Wow! Santi gets 100!" (Field note, School One). His comment provoked other students' reactions, and the class became rowdy, especially when the teacher began to acknowledge Santi's achievement. The peers' reactions were ones that cast doubt on her ability to obtain a high

score. They started to “question” Santi’s achievement amongst themselves, compared their marks with hers and mark and saying it was “impossible” for Santi to get a high score. Some of them said that Santi “had someone else do the homework”; that she did not do the homework “by herself”. It seems that Santi’s peers thought that strong achievement by students labelled as learning disabled such as Santi could only be the result of help from others, thereby reinforcing her identity as a person with a low ability level. Also, if she had received help, then that was another sign of her incompetence.

These attitudes continued to surface as Santi’s peers made further comments about Santi’s maths score:

Student 6: Of course she got a 100 ... it’s homework!

Student 8: We’ll see ... she won’t be able to do math when the exam comes ... It’s better to get a low mark, but at the end of the day you can get a high mark. But it’s no use to get a high mark ... [if it’s] not your own work! [Said while staring at Santi]

(Field note, School One)

Student 8’s remark illustrated her belief that Santi was likely to fail to demonstrate her ability when she was expected to do the task on her own. It was “no use” getting a high mark, the student said, when it did not represent the actual ability.

Wawan often received similar remarks from his peers when he got a good result. His peers claimed his achievement was not a result of his ability or effort, but because, as several of them said, “He cheats”. The beliefs that Wawan’s peers held about Wawan’s ability influenced their evaluations of Wawan’s achievement, especially when he showed improvement in his learning. Cheating, they claimed, was Wawan’s strategy for getting high marks, and the “fact” he had to cheat justified his peers’ perceptions that he was unlikely to achieve without recourse to such behaviour.

During my observations, I noticed that Wawan appeared to copy other students’ work, especially when he was doing tasks he regarded as difficult. My interviews with Wawan’s peers confirmed that he typically copied other students’ work when the teacher assigned group work. They said Wawan would wait for his peers to do the task before copying down their answers. Realising that Wawan copied their answers, his peers usually reported his behaviour to the teacher, emphasising that Wawan “only copies” and does not want to “think”. Having told the teacher what Wawan had done; peers who were in the same group as Wawan reprimanded him with harsh comments or names, such as *pekok* or stupid.

The above examples demonstrate that peers viewed achievement of students labelled as learning disabled as the result of an external factor

instead of these students' efforts. The peers' responses seemed to validate their assumptions that students labelled as learning disabled will fail and that success is only for peers. The implication of this finding is that when students' achievement is mainly attributed to their level of ability, students labelled as learning disabled are likely to experience detrimental outcomes, including their self-efficacy beliefs, even when they do achieve, as their progress in learning is seen as suspect (Woodcock & Vialle, 2010) (see also Chapter Five).

As I mentioned in the section on research participants in Chapter Three, the majority of students from the two case study schools were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Three of the four of my participating students labelled as learning disabled were from family backgrounds that could be classified as "working class" and the other student was from a middle level socioeconomic background. The occupations represented by their parents were security officer, car mechanic, handyman, housekeeper, and labourer. I contend that socioeconomic background cannot be separated from the context influencing how the teachers and students in my study had constructed their concepts of students labelled as learning disabled. As I spent more time in the schools, I realised that, to some extent, socioeconomic background and learning disabilities were a prominent intersectionality that

offered important understanding about what was happening in relation to learning disabilities in those schools.

The interview data from all participating teachers and school heads showed that they held a deterministic view with respect to socioeconomic background and learning disabilities. They maintained that learning disabilities were caused by a low socioeconomic family background. However, they also believed that parents from such backgrounds showed disengagement in students' learning, which could further explain why students labelled as learning disabled were unlikely to succeed. Lestari, for example, thought that Nining's problem was exacerbated by low parental involvement in her study due to her parents' workload.

“Nining ... basically her parents ... her mother, Nining is not well taken care of. Every morning her mother works as a labourer in a factory until nine p.m., while her father works in construction ... So, no one helps her to learn at home. I think she receives less ... receives less parental support.... Having less parental support because her parents have to work.”
(Interview, Lestari, School One)

Lestari's supposition that of lack of parental involvement was contributing to Nining's learning problems and achievement resonates with the findings of several studies on factors influencing students' learning, such as those by Chandler (2014) and Gale and Densmore (2002). Chandler investigated understanding of learning disabilities by teachers in a poor rural

school. The study showed that the teachers' stereotypical beliefs about students' family backgrounds were critical factors in explaining students' achievement. In short, success and failure in learning were, for these teachers, a function of socioeconomic background. Other studies have shown that students who are raised in a socioeconomically-disadvantaged family are prone to experience academic deficits that lead to learning disabilities (see, for example, Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007). This finding, in turn, suggests that environmental factors can be associated with academic disadvantage (Diuk et al., 2019; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Shiraev & Levy, 2010), and that schools can legitimise a family's condition as a reason for student failure (Blair & Scott, 2002; Christensen, 1999; Skidmore, 2004; Tomlinson, 2017).

I was interested to find that the socioeconomic backgrounds of all my participating teachers differed from the backgrounds of their students. This mismatch between teachers' socioeconomic backgrounds and their students' home lives is relatively common in Indonesian schools, and could therefore be contributing to the teachers' assumption that low socioeconomic background has a considerable influence on students' difficulties and failures (Chandler, 2014; Reay, 2006). Like Lestari (above), all the teachers in my study stated that low socioeconomic background related to low parental support (see also Chapter Five).

Skidmore (2004) too found that teachers' views about low student achievement could be influenced by whether or not their students came from "disadvantaged" family backgrounds, which were frequently identified as those with working-class parents. Such thinking assumes that students raised in a low socioeconomic family will be at a disadvantage scholastically because such backgrounds are the ones most likely to produce low ability children (Buckingham et al., 2013; Gale & Densmore, 2002). The related assumption, and the one expressed by Lestari, is that low socioeconomic families restrict their children from gaining access to learning because of "less parental support". Once again, this practice of attributing the cause of learning disabilities to something intrinsic to the student resonated in my study.

4.4. Learning characteristics

Compared to the peers in my study, the students labelled as learning disabled showed a slower pace of learning and different learning behaviours. The teachers interpreted these different ways of learning as a characteristic of students labelled as learning disabled that influenced their ability to learn. These behaviours, said the teachers, hindered the students from achieving success because they prevented them from managing to meet the teacher-assigned learning targets.

Three of the four of the participating teachers highlighted this construction of learning disabilities, when they stated that students labelled as learning disabled's pace of learning is slower than the pace of other students. Annisa and Lestari told me that Santi and Nining were "slow in understanding the lesson". Lestari supported this claim by saying that "... learning should be fast, and all students should learn fast" (Interview, Lestari, School One). Her construction of learning as a process that students accomplish at the same pace strongly suggests that she had limited understanding of differential learning speeds among students. In short, her comment about pace of learning fed into her belief that all students learn the same way. But she did realise that her construction of learning did not apply to Santi and Nining because "... they cannot be urged to learn fast ... because they can't" (Interview, Lestari, School One). Because these students were intrinsically unable to learn at the pace she considered constituted "proper" learning, they were labelled as learning disabled. During my observations, Santi and Nining were often the last students to submit their work to their teacher for grading. They usually submitted it almost at the end of the school hour. Lestari said their slowness was a "challenge" because it tended to have a detrimental effect on her teaching and the other students' learning. Endah expressed the same problems with respect to Putri and Wawan, her students labelled as learning disabled:

“They are the ones who are the latest to submit their work; they work slower than the other [students]...” (Interview, Endah, School Two)

Endah’s construction of learning focused on the punctuality with which students submitted their work. Wawan and Putri were late to submit because they needed more time than their peers to complete tasks. Endah said she thought Wawan’s and Putri’s problems understanding lessons contributed to their slow pace of learning, and she frequently, as I observed, commented on Wawan’s and Putri’s slowness when she was in the classroom with all her students. She also made the same types of comment during my interview with her. She told the class that Wawan and Putri were “in need of assistance” and that the rest of the class did not need such assistance (“... the other students can learn by themselves” is how she expressed this view to me during our interview). The message she conveyed to the students at such times was that students labelled as learning disabled needed assistance because they lacked ability.

The teachers’ descriptions of the students labelled as learning disabled during daily classroom activities were evident in comments made by the students’ peers. They, too, recognised that the students labelled as learning disabled needed more time to finish their work. Wawan’s and Putri’s peers again used the derogative term *pekok* when the two students were the last to hand in their work and/or had difficulty understanding a lesson. This use of

deficit language by peers reflected their apparent acceptance that Wawan and Putri were indeed “stupid”, lacking in ability. When I asked Student 3 (their peer) to describe Wawan and Putri, he did so by highlighting their ability level:

“Wawan ... Putri ... they’re slow to think ... hard to understand the lessons ... not smart ...” (Informal interview, Student 3, School Two)

He saw the two students labelled as learning disabled in negative terms because they their learning performance was poor. He clearly categorised students labelled as learning disabled as incompetent.

Santi’s and Nining’s peers also emphasised their “slowness” as their key learning characteristic. During one of my observations, one student informed the teacher why her group were refusing to include Santi and Nining in the learning activity:

“But they are so, so, so, slow ...” (Field note, School One)

As one of the two students’ peers explained, their group would “go home late” because they had to wait for Santi and Nining to finish the tasks:

Costrie: So they are slow. What does it feel like for you to have slow peers in your class?

Student 1: We’re going home late.

Costrie: Going home late? Do you think that they are the reason for you being late for home?

Student 1: Hmm ... yeah.

(Interview, Student 1, School One)

Student 1 attributed Santi's and Nining's slowness to keeping them on at school even though he and the others in the group had "finished the task on time". With speed obviously valued as a positive indicator of student ability, slowness was a sign of lacking in ability. The fact that the students labelled as learning disabled could not finish their task on time illustrates teaching and learning that is not designed for students who do not perform learning activities and achieve learning outcomes at the same rate as other students (Cooter & Cooter, 2004).

Slow rates of learning and difficulty understanding lessons were characteristics the study participants typically used to describe the learning-disabled students with disabilities. Their comments and actions contained the assumption that students labelled as learning disabled would fall behind other students because of their difficulty making sense of what they were meant to be learning. According to Pujaningsih (2005), slow pace of learning is one of the indicators that Indonesian teachers use to determine if a student is learning disabled. Certainly, a slow pace of learning was one of the main ways the study teachers identified the presence of a learning disability. However, this construction does not align with the Indonesian government's

contention that learning disabilities equate with a lack of academic ability (see Chapter One).

As mentioned earlier, teachers mainly used the criterion of cognitive performance to identify whether students ought to have a learning-disabled label. However, data from the observations of and interviews with teachers and peers revealed that the students labelled as learning disabled in this study performed differently from the other students in the classrooms. Because the *learning equals being taught* model constructs teachers as experts who decide what and how students learn (Smith & Barr, 2008), teachers feel the need to control and manage students' learning, including identifying what behaviours they expect their students to exhibit during learning. The teachers in my study viewed students labelled as learning disabled's behaviours as passive and disengaged in learning. The teachers assumed that this disengagement was caused by their lack of interest in learning, and not investing effort in tasks. These behaviours were the characteristics the teachers relied on to affirm their conclusions about these students' problems. Teachers and peers identified various behaviours as indicative of the students labelled as learning disabled "disengagement", such as "disconnected", "day-dreaming", and "easily giving up". These findings align with the outcomes of a study conducted in Australia by Christensen and Baker (2002). They found that Grade 2 students in Australia whom their teachers said were slow to finish,

prone to wandering-off, or clumsy were perceived by those teachers as having learning disabilities.

On another occasion featuring Endah, she reported that when she asks her students to do a task, one of the students she identified as learning-disabled often “copies other’s work ... refuses to work on his own ... doesn’t want to try first...” (Interview, Endah, School Two). She again assumed these behaviours to be signs of disengagement. She thought disengagement was a behaviour the students labelled as learning disabled used to minimise failure. The ways students responded to tasks provided their teachers with information that they could use to judge students’ competencies. Thus, the teachers constructed students’ competencies on the basis of their learning behaviours. Observation data also revealed the students labelled as learning disabled exhibiting passive behaviours, which the teachers described as being “very quiet” in class. Teachers and peers supported this view by commenting that students labelled as learning disabled hardly spoke, even when their teacher asked them to respond to questions. Their reactions would be either silence or a smile.

Aminah and Endah both expressed concern about Wawan’s troublesome behaviours during learning activities. For example, Endah told me that Wawan was likely to act in a provocative way when doing the task,

such as “starting to make comments about others”, an action that triggered other students to reply to his comments. As a result, the class became “chaotic” because his comments started a chain reaction of provocative comments from the other students (Interview, Endah, School Two). Although Endah offered no further explanation as to why she thought Wawan acted in this manner, she did say that she thought Wawan’s learning problem contributed to his external behaviours. She seemed at this point to be constructing learning disabilities as involving both cognitive and behavioural aspects, including a gendered one. Several studies (see, for example Emam & Kazem, 2015; Wu, Willcutt, Escovar, & Menon, 2014) show male students rather than female students tending to display externalising behaviours, such as Wawan’s provocative comments.

When I had opportunity to ask the students labelled as learning disabled about their learning in the classroom, they answered that they found being asked a question by their teacher a “frightening” experience because they felt “embarrassed” if their answer was incorrect. They therefore tried to minimise the risk of exposing their weaknesses in learning by choosing not to say anything or to look the teacher. These students seemed to be trying to avoid stigma from their teachers and peers by not giving a response. They appeared to understand that they had a high possibility of failing in learning and that they had limited resources to deal with the negative consequences of this.

Their avoidance strategy aligns with the Matthew effect, in which failure begets failure. Thus, students labelled as learning disabled' experiences of failure teach them to avoid tasks in order to minimise opportunity to exercise their knowledge and skills, a response that exacerbates their initial difficulties (Scarborough & Parker, 2003; Sideridis, 2011). This process accords with findings from other studies (see, for example Shifrer, 2013; Zhao, Li, Li, & Yu, 2019) showing that students labelled as learning disabled are vulnerable to experiencing negative stereotypes about their academic achievement because of the label of learning disabled. This type of stigmatisation tends to produce high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-efficacy among students so labelled (Shifrer, 2013; Zhao et al., 2019).

4.5. Shared information between teachers

Data from the participating teachers revealed that identifying students who met the learning-disabled label was the result of social processes that occurred during teacher meetings and informal discussions between teachers. On these occasions, teachers had opportunities to discuss issues they were experiencing with their students in their classrooms. According to the *learning equals being taught* model, the role of teacher as expert would have been influencing the teachers' descriptions and treatment of the students they considered to be learning disabled. According to Christensen (1999), learning

disabilities are products of social practices, a supposition that supports the theory of social construction which holds that the meanings behind a concept derive from and are shaped by history and social interactions (Burr, 2015). I experienced an example of this when I asked Lestari about her certainty that Santi and Nining were learning-disabled. She replied that she had “consulted with [the two students’] previous teachers,” who had confirmed the students as “slow in learning ... also happened during the third grade (Interview, Lestari, School One). These teachers’ past experiences with Santi and Nining had shaped Lestari’s views about these students in the present. For Lestari, the information from the former teacher appeared to have strengthened her belief that these Santi and Nining had learning problems.

Aminah shared a similar story with me. She received information from the school’s Grade 4 teacher about Wawan’s and Putri’s performance. This teacher said, “Wawan and Putri have learning problems.” However, instead of agreeing with the previous teacher’s view, Aminah seemed to have developed a somewhat different view about Wawan and Putri: “[They] have no learning problems, although Wawan needs assistance and Putri is all right, but needs more time to think” (Field note, School One).

Aminah’s response was interesting because of her relatively positive view about the two students’ learning abilities. It is possible that Aminah’s

previous teaching experience in another school could have influenced her view that any learning difficulties Wawan and Putri might have were manageable. Her comments indicate that teachers' judgements about students labelled as learning disabled can vary, probably in line with their different understandings of the concept of learning disabilities. Teachers' different opinions about students labelled as learning disabled suggest that teachers may negotiate the labels attached to students labelled as learning disabled in accordance with the learning contexts under which these students were initially identified as learning disabled. The extent to which teachers accurately judge what constitutes a learning disability and what does not may accord with teachers' knowledge about students' disabilities in particular and teachers' expertise in general (Paleczek, Seifert, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2017). The labels teachers attach to students labelled as learning disabled may also be a product of how much teachers share and contest knowledge about learning disabilities as they interact with one another.

4.6. Teachers and students' perceptions of learning disabilities

Despite Aminah's more positive comment about her two students labelled as learning disabled, all the participating teachers and peers seem to hold negative attitudes toward students labelled as learning disabled. Examples

from the observation data reveal a variety of situations where teachers and peers saw the students labelled as learning disabled as incompetent:

During maths lessons, the teacher asks the students to work in groups.... The teacher arranges the composition of the groups ... Putri and Wawan, as well as some other students, are grouped in different groups. Putri is grouped with three other students ... once Putri joins with the appointed group, the teacher says to Putri's group, "Now you're in the same group... It's okay ... because Student 4 can teach you." The teacher sets up the other groups in the same way. After checking the student composition in each group, the teacher talks to all students: "Listen! The main thing is that there's at least one student in each group who understands ... and also know how to solve it ... [He or she] should also help his or her peers who don't understand." (Field note, School Two)

In this instance, Aminah grouped Putri and Wawan with peers so they could learn from peers who "understand" the tasks. This mixed grouping allowed the students labelled as learning disabled to learn with their peers. However, the mixed composition appeared to convey the message to all students in the classroom that peers are more "able" than students labelled as learning disabled: because students labelled as learning disabled are unlikely to learn by themselves, they need help from their peers. In highlighting the role peers have relative to students labelled as learning disabled could potentially lead to division among students, in addition to further stigmatising the students labelled as learning disabled, who were already likely to have low status among

their peers. The learning-disabled status seemed to influence how the teacher set the students labelled as learning disabled's positions within groups that accentuated the different ability levels between the students (Lucas & Phelan, 2012).

The teacher [Aminah] gives an exercise on maths about square and cube. The teacher instructs the students, "Do your own; if you don't understand, ask ...!" The teacher looks at Student 3, who is explaining the task to Wawan, then comments: "I like the way Student 3 helps Wawan..." The teacher walks around the class, then she talks to several students, telling them to ask for help from their seatmate if they don't know ... When she approaches Putri, the teacher says, "Putri, if you don't understand, ask Student 4!" (Field note, School Two)

In this example, Aminah seemed to see Putri and Wawan as dependent on their peers because she assumed that they would not understand the lesson. Therefore, she wanted Putri and Wawan to seek help from their peers. I was particularly interested to observe how Aminah arranged and rearranged the group, always ensuring a mixed composition between one student labelled as learning disabled and other students, with the others frequently including one of my peers. She frequently set up groups of students so that they contained students she identified as smart being on hand to teach the other students within the respective groups.

The students labelled as learning disabled often exhibited behaviour or made comments that affirmed they did not see themselves as academically competent:

Nining: I don't think I can do this task ... I don't understand it [the maths task].

Costrie: Why do you think so?"

Nining: This task is too difficult for me.

(Field note, Nining, School One)

Nining's belief about that she lacked academic competence saw her avoiding doing the task. Her understanding of learning challenges reflected her low academic self-concept (Shilshtein & Margalit, 2019). Santi's awareness of being labelled as learning disabled also reduced her expectations of herself. The low status of both these students within the group and their views of themselves as such was likely affecting the teachers' low expectations of them (Lucas & Phelan, 2012). Putri, too, seemed to have internalised her teacher's classification of her as "unable" and her peers' recognition of her in terms of her difficulty. That internalisation had shaped her identity as a learner and as a member of a particular group – students who do not achieve academically.

The above findings reveal learning disabilities as a stigmatising attribute, which was created and routinely communicated through classroom

activities that marginalised the students labelled as learning disabled. Yet again, the students labelled as learning disabled' learning did not correspond with the type of learning that Smith and Barr (2008) describe in their *learning equals being taught* model, whereas the learning of the students the teachers labelled as "smart" did. The teachers saw smart students as having distinctive qualities that would allow them to succeed. Their teachers expected them to achieve and accorded them learning privileges. They also viewed smart students as ones who held higher positions and stronger influences within their learning groups. Lestari said, "[S]mart students have to be supported to be smarter," indicating that encouraging such students is worthwhile, but that the same could not be said for students labelled as learning disabled because they are "hard to improve". This is an interesting excerpt, showing that the teacher tended to believe that they can make a difference by accommodating smart students' success but not the students labelled as learning disabled. It seems that this thinking about "smart" students versus students labelled as learning disabled can also legitimate how ability status determines students' learning experiences.

4.7. Chapter summary

Teachers' constructions of learning disabilities are defined in terms of deficit in various academic-related areas, such as reading, calculation, and writing. In this study, the construction of learning disabilities was based mainly on level of ability. Low achievement was seen as an inevitable result of a low ability.

The main point to take from the findings presented in this chapter is that the participants constructed learning disabilities as a fixed disability, meaning that, for them, learning disabilities cannot be addressed or remedied. This construction also assumes that ability is measurable and that the outcomes of that measurement can be used to categorise and locate individuals, which leads to labelling people as learning-disabled or not-learning-disabled. This process was evident in the participants' stories in this chapter. The chapter also indicates that the information teachers share with one another can legitimise and reinforce the constructions they have already made about students labelled as learning disabled. Those constructions, in turn, can influence how teachers treat these students' learning in the classroom.

The participating teachers' understanding of learning disabilities also developed from specific behaviours exhibited by or attributes attributed to the

students identified as learning disabled. Behaviours included difficulty understanding lessons, being reluctant to respond to teacher-assigned tasks, failing to meet expected learning outcomes, showing a slow pace of learning, and acting out in class. All of these constructions propose teachers' tendency to locate students' difficulties within the individual student and to neglect the school, curriculum, and pedagogical factors that contribute to the construction of learning disabilities and learning disabled.

In the next chapter, I focus on teachers' practices in the classrooms with respect to student diversity, including students labelled as learning disabled.

Chapter Five: Teaching practices involving students labelled as learning disabled

5.1. Introduction

My previous chapter discussed teachers' constructions of students labelled as learning disabled. This second finding chapter aims to answer the first sub-question on how teachers' understandings of learning disabilities affect their pedagogical practices and relationships with students labelled as learning disabled. The teachers played strong roles in creating and maintaining student difference through their day-to-day practices in classrooms. The focus of this fifth chapter is on exploring the specific teaching and learning practices the teachers were employing in their classrooms with respect to students labelled as learning disabled. I used Skidmore's (2002) theoretical model of pedagogical discourse of deviance as a frame for analysing and contrasting the data deriving from my interviews with the teachers and my observations in their classrooms.

5.2. A theoretical model of pedagogical discourse

Skidmore's (2002, 2004) concept of pedagogical discourse came from his study in two English high schools. He identified two types of pedagogical discourse: *discourse of deviance* and *discourse of inclusion*. The two are distinguished by five dimensions: students' educability, explanation of

students' failure, schools' responses to students, theory of teaching expertise, and curriculum model (see also Chapter Two of this thesis).

The discourse of deviance refers to any educational practice deriving from the understanding that learning-related issues are peculiar to the student (Skidmore, 2002, 2004). This discourse suggests that the school system does not contribute to students' learning. In my study, the discourse of deviance was evident in the everyday teaching practices. For example, teachers were using ability grouping to emphasise ability differences between students labelled as learning disabled and peers. Teachers used a ranking system defined in terms of fixed and innate ability to assign students to these groups.

In contrast, *the discourse of inclusion* (Skidmore, 2002, 2004) stems from the concept that all students have the potential to learn and share knowledge through the development of dynamic relationships between teachers and students. This discourse acknowledges the contributions that schools, curricula, and pedagogy play in students' failure to achieve specified learning outcomes. It also maintains that it is the school community's understanding of education policy that directs and controls how the school organises the curriculum and pedagogy. Under this discourse, the school is encouraged to develop an adaptive curriculum that responds to student diversity and their individual needs.

Skidmore (2002, 2004) also describes how teachers' pedagogy is shaped by their understanding of their students. Thus, how teachers orchestrate learning is based on their construction of their students. The way teachers organise their classrooms cannot be separated from their beliefs and dispositions about what constitutes an effective approach when teaching students with disabilities (Cornoldi, Capodieci, Colomer Diago, Miranda, & Shepherd, 2018). Therefore, teachers with students labelled as learning disabled in their classrooms will shape their pedagogical skills to accommodate the learning needs of those students. In my study, the beliefs and values of the participating teachers evident in the last chapter seem to align with the deviance discourse. However, as I show in this current chapter, there were a few examples of teachers utilising the inclusion discourse or a mixture of both discourses in their pedagogical practice.

5.3. Student categorisation

According to the *discourse of deviance*, students' educability refers to students' abilities to learn. Students' educability is determined through the use of standardised tools such as intelligence tests to justify a student's cognitive capacity relative to the cognitive capacities of the other students. Within the bell curve distribution of achievement among the student population are those students classified as "normal" and "educable". In some

educational jurisdictions, students positioned on the left-hand extreme of the curve (that is, outside the “norm”) tend to be categorised as subnormal and therefore “ineducable”.

I asked the teachers participating in my study to allocate each student in their class to one of three “bands” – smart, average, and slow – based on his or her learning performance. Band one was for students deemed “smart”; band three was for the students the teachers considered to be “slow”. The categorisation of students as smart, average, or slow was based on the teachers’ perceptions of students’ abilities, which were dominated by the academic aspect. Smart students were those whose achievement placed them among the top 10 academic achievers in the class. The lowest-achieving students were those positioned in the 10 bottom places in the class. They included students labelled as learning disabled. Lestari gave these descriptions of the students she classified as smart:

“[C]an catch up with lessons... [is] able to give the right answer...” (Interview, School One)

For Lestari, being smart related to students’ abilities to frequently show evidence of cognitive capability. She was the teacher who thought “smart students ... should be supported to be smarter” (see Chapter Four; Interview, Lestari, School One). Her categorisation influenced how she thought teachers should treat different students, with smart students more deserving than

students labelled as learning disabled of being given learning opportunities that allowed them to showcase their educability. Being smart seemed to be highly valued by the teachers, and were likely to see the students labelled as learning disabled as “stuck!” Teachers assumed that students who could not demonstrate the requisite academic skills had learning disabilities. For the participating teachers, categorising their students gave them a means of creating and supporting social order among the students, which meant pedagogical practices favouring differential learning, maintenance of social inequity (Thompson, 2015), and learning privileges for some but not all (Gale & Densmore, 2002). In short, students labelled as learning disabled were unlikely to learn and achieve.

The teachers’ classifications of their students and commensurate teaching practices conveyed messages to students about what it means to have high or low intelligence as a student. Students were led to believe who was smart, who was not, and how to interact with students in those categories. The students understood that to be classified as high achieving students, they had to prove their ability and competence to their teachers and peers. In this study, all teachers gave the same tasks to all students, but the peers were more active in their participation in class activities than the students labelled as learning disabled. The peers were likely to put

themselves forward to complete tasks or answer questions when the teacher asked their participation.

Students classified as smart were seen as accountable for their consistency in producing the correct answers, whereas students labelled as learning disabled were more likely to be underestimated and seen as incapable of completing or answering the task correctly. As a result, when the students labelled as learning disabled obtained a high score on a task, their peers were likely not to believe it because of their belief that the students labelled as learning disabled could not achieve. During my observations, I recorded several peers discussing Santi's achievement for a maths assignment. They were hesitant, knowing that Santi had achieved a perfect grade, but unable to believe it: "I think she cheats, you know... she never gets [that grade]. I doubt it!" Other students started to make jokes about Santi's grade:

Student 1: [talking to Student 2] You are no better than Santi, she gets 100. You only get 70. Ha ha... Santi beat you!

Student 2: Well ... I don't care.

(Field note, School One)

The peers' responses to Santi's grade also showed that they did not consider her a threat to their academic achievement. Their beliefs seemed to align with a discourse of deviance in that Santi was unable to learn. When

these peers constructed her using a deficit lens, they underestimated her potential to achieve good grades. They still saw the fact that she had got a good grade as deficient and an undeserved indication of progress in learning. Her peers understood that her lower position in the class's ability hierarchy meant her achievement was an aberration. This evidence of the Santi's peers constructing her from a deviance discourse is an indication of how students labelled as learning disabled's access to learning is compromised; students who are smart are the ones who can achieve and are the ones worth expending time on or associating with; students labelled as learning disabled will not succeed and so are left behind. Students' educability is thus a product of their perceived ability and competence (Siivonen, 2013). Within the discourse of deviance, issues related to student's learning are entirely linked to the student rather than to school.

In the next section, I discuss causes of learning failure among students labelled as learning disabled.

5.4. Causes of failure

Teachers and peers attributed failure to learn of students labelled as learning disabled to internal factors such as ability, socioeconomic background, and limited family support. As mentioned in Chapter Four, these perceptions influenced students' achievement and led to the "self-fulfilling prophecy"

(Heyd-Metzuyanim, 2013). For teachers, ability was a fixed and innate condition, meaning that ability is a fixed entity that cannot be changed (Woodcock & Jiang, 2018). Therefore, students labelled as learning disabled would be the students most likely to experience failure because they were “less intelligent” (Skidmore, 2002, p. 121).

The participating teachers often spoke about students’ low socioeconomic backgrounds. Endah, for example, had this to say: “Most of my students come from low class families ... these students labelled as learning disabled ... they are less competent than other students” (Field note, School Two). Being known as poor and having learning disabilities leaves students labelled as learning disabled labouring under what is known as “double jeopardy”. Viewing the situation from that perspective, Endah saw students from low socioeconomic families and as learning-disabled as disadvantaged twice over and so doubly (Skidmore, 2004), where a student’s home background would be seen as contributing to the students labelled as learning disabled’ perceived inability to achieve. This perspective absolves schools from responsibility for these students’ failure.

All participating teachers mentioned that low parental involvement in students’ learning was another reason why students labelled as learning disabled do not achieve. These students experience failure because their

parents have “limited time to assist ... [are] busy working ... [and] meeting basic needs is the main priority rather than helping their children” (Interview, Aminah, School Two). This finding again provides evidence of a deviance discourse, in which academic failure among students labelled as learning disabled arises, in part, from living in a disadvantaged family environment. For the participating teachers, students who were from low socioeconomic backgrounds and were also learning disabled had likely experienced at home lack of proper upbringing, little effort to provide motivation and stimulation, and values at variance with achievement (Gale & Densmore, 2002). In this instance, family status explained students labelled as learning disabled’s failure (Skidmore, 2004) and left the family as responsible for the students’ learning (Chandler, 2014; Gale & Densmore, 2002).

The students labelled as learning disabled in my study did not seem to challenge teachers’ and peers’ views about their learning problems but accepted those views as their own. They developed their understanding about and behaviours relating to learning according to the view of others. Sometimes, the students labelled as learning disabled refused to participate in learning activities, realising that they were likely to fail. Putri, for example, described her anxiety during a lesson when the teacher asked her to write her answer on the whiteboard. “I feel embarrassed,” she said to me, “if I make mistake, because I know I will make mistakes.” When Putri wrote an answer

the teacher said was “incorrect”, the teacher asked another student to help Putri. During the break after this class session, Putri repeated her statement to me: “See ... I make mistakes” (Field note, School Two). Putri had anticipated that she would fail, she made a mistake, one visible to the teacher and class. This public exposure further undermined her confidence to demonstrate her knowledge and reinforced her belief that she was incapable of doing class tasks (Francis et al., 2017).

On another occasion, Wawan avoided doing a task because he, too, thought he would probably make mistakes:

“I can’t ... I just can’t ... I’m not sure if I’ll make the right answer ...”

The teacher’s reaction to Wawan’s refusal seems to make Wawan avoid the task.

Wawan: I can’t, Miss!

Endah: [Looking at Wawan) I’ve already taught you! How come you have forgotten it? Do it out front, Wawan!

Wawan: No, I can’t, Miss!

Endah appoints another student to write the answer in front of the class.

(Field note, School Two)

The reasons for Wawan's refusal to do the task seem to be twofold. Firstly, Wawan's perception of the difficulty of the task decreased his confidence level to do it correctly. Believing that the difficulty of the task exceeded his ability to solve it, he tried to avoid doing it. He ascribed his poor performance to his belief in his capability, making assertions indicative of his assumption that he would never achieve. Secondly, the teacher's response, appointing another student to do the task rather than helping Wawan clarify his understanding about it, seemed to legitimise the teacher's low expectation of Wawan. The teacher's approach not only failed to consider or recognise obstacles to Wawan's learning but also fed into the self-fulfilling prophecy of Wawan continuing to fail because he had internalised the teacher's belief that he would fail (Riley & Ungerleider, 2012). The students labelled as learning disabled's identification of themselves as incompetent manifested in situations where their beliefs about their ability aligned with the ideas the teachers and peers shared about that ability. The students labelled as learning disabled's responses to the tasks were rooted in the lack of ability (Skidmore, 2004) that their teachers and peers continuously communicated to them.

The ways the two schools were addressing the students labelled as learning disabled' learning problems is my focus in the next section.

5.5. School responses

I found that the teachers were using three strategies to respond to the students labelled as learning disabled' difficulties: (1) peer tutorial; (2) praise; and (3) altering grades.

The practice of peer tutoring was evident in both schools, especially as a means of assisting the students labelled as learning disabled when they experienced difficulties with the lessons. I often saw the teachers appointing peers to help the students labelled as learning disabled, such as showing them the steps of how to answer a question. Although the peers and students labelled as learning disabled worked together in an interactive manner, the peers seemed to dominate the talk and the students labelled as learning disabled gave few overt signs of participation during the explanations. The following example is typical of this situation:

After the teacher explains a topic of multiplication in front the class ... she looks at some students who sit next to Wawan and Putri and gives them instructions. "Okay, then, Wisnu, Susi ..., check Wawan and Putri ... *Make sure they understand what I've just explained* emphasis added]" ... Once Wisnu finishes his explanation, he asks Putri, "Do you get it?" [Meanwhile] when Wawan cannot answer, Susi explains the multiplication step again to Wawan. When she finishes her explanation, she asks Wawan, "Understood?" (Field note, School Two).

By involving other students to help Wawan and Putri with the topic, the teacher seemed to support integration between students. The two students'

seatmates repeated what the teacher had explained, but Wawan and Putri remained silent during the explanations. Their seatmates dominated the talk, leaving little room for Wawan and Putri to ask for further clarification. Wawan and Putri only responded at the end of the tutoring, when their seatmates asked whether they understood the explanations. At that point, they nodded their heads and said “[I] get it” to their seatmates.

In asking other students to help Wawan and Putri, the teacher positioned the two as incompetent in the eyes of their seatmates because they had to rely on support from them to access the curriculum. The seatmates’ actions indicated they also held disempowering views toward Wawan’s and Putri’s abilities to understand. When I observed the interactions, Wawan and Putri were passive, hardly engaged in the learning process, because the seatmates were dominating and directing the learning, without inviting an interactive and dialogical approach. They positioned Wawan and Putri as less knowledgeable than them, which supported inequity.

Two of the four participating teachers used the second strategy, giving praise. They most tended to use praise when the students showed the expected response or result during learning. The teachers seemed to have a “list” of criteria for giving praise to the students labelled as learning disabled, which was based on their evaluation of the students’ learning progress.

However, they were not consistent in the way they gave praise. For example, Lestari explained to me that when Santi and Nining showed a satisfactory result for their maths homework, she chose to praise Santi over Nining.

Lestari's praise to Santi was based on her (Lestari's) evaluation of Santi's learning. Lestari reasoned that praising Santi after Santi's good performance would encourage Santi "to keep producing expected results" (Interview, Lestari, School One). Lestari's feedback served as approval directed toward helping Santi repeat the desirable behaviour. Praise also had the potential to positively influence Santi's self-esteem. Bani (2011) is among the many researchers who have found that praising to children tends to encourage them to continue doing the desirable behaviour. However, in schools, this practice also has the potential to make students think that teachers value achievement of performance goals, such as grades, more highly than they value effort (Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

In contrast, Lestari did not praise Nining even when she responded well to tasks and gained good grades. When I asked why Lestari took this approach, she said that Nining did not show consistent learning improvement. Her evaluation was that Nining was less likely than Santi to go on achieving similar tasks, so there was little value in praising him. Lestari's somewhat

different views of each learning-disabled student appeared to be influencing how she responded to their respective performance of a task.

The third strategy was altering grades, and all the teachers in the participating schools exercised their authority to alter students' grades to meet the KKM performance criteria. Knowing that certain students such as students labelled as learning disabled are prone to getting low grades, the teachers adjusted the KKM standards criteria, as Endah explained:

“[The learning-disabled] students ... have the worst achievements... The worst grade is 30 ... The grades of these students are altered to meet the KKM criteria. The KKM criteria is 60, so I have to increase their grades.” (Interview, Endah, School Two)

Believing that students labelled as learning disabled were more likely to get lower grades than other students, Endah intervened by deliberately increasing the students' scores and thereby increasing their grades to meet the curriculum standards. The teachers all admitted to making these changes for students such as Wawan and Putri, known for their low achievement.

Lestari said she adjusted Santi's and Nining's grades to meet the KKM criteria, although she maintained their “real” grades on their answer sheets. She said she had to increase Santi's and Nining's grades to avoid them being retained, that is, not letting them advance with their classmates to the next year grade.

- Lestari: If you see Nining's daily tests ... Oh dear ... None of her answers are connected ... Her highest score is 33, or something like that ... Her scores are bad ... their [students labelled as learning disabled'] grades are zero. Their scores are zero ... they don't do the tasks.
- Costrie: What do you do with their scores?
- Lestari: Hmm ... sometimes I modify her scores with many points. Before modifying, I will rank the scores of all students. Let's say I rank them from one to thirty-four, then I look at their grades, and if their grade range is too far ... I adjust the grades. Santi and Nining ... their grades will be adjusted according to the minimum mastery criteria.
- Costrie: What is your reason for changing their grades?
- Lestari: Well ... it is a common practice. They won't retain, but there should be some adjustments on their grades ... Santi and Nining ... no matter how hard you try to change them ... improve them, their abilities are still the same. (Interview, Lestari, School One)

The above excerpt not only explains Lestari's justification for altering Santi's and Nining's grades to meet the KKM criteria but also points to her belief that supporting these students' learning any other way would not be effective because their low ability means they could not achieve. Ascribing students' failure to low ability can evoke a feeling of pity in teachers and prompt them to help (Woodcock & Jiang, 2018), but the participating teachers' strategy of altering grades was limited response predicated on their construction of the students lacking the ability needed to achieve.

While the teachers saw altering grades for students such as Santi and Nining a common way of “helping” students by intentionally ensuring they would not be retained, this practice can also be seen as a strategy to “get rid of” these students. Furthermore, the practice of increasing the grades was probably associated with not “losing face” because of the pressure on ensuring student achievement that teachers in Indonesia tend to experience from their schools, education authorities and society (Isnawati & Saukah, 2017). The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture No. 67 (2013) states that the goal of the 2013 Indonesian National Curriculum is to prepare Indonesians to be “faithful, productive, creative innovative, and effective individuals and citizens who can contribute to the community, the nation, and the world” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013a) (see also Chapter One). Students are required to meet the competencies specified in the Regulation of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture No. 54 (2013) on Basic and Secondary Competence Standards (Indonesia *Standar Kompetensi Lulusan Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah*). These standards include both core competencies (Indonesia *Kompetensi Inti*) and basic competencies (Indonesia *Kompetensi Dasar* (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013b).

Although Lestari changed Santi’s and Nining’s grades to meet the KKM, she also maintained their “real” grades on their worksheets so she

could discuss them with other teachers during a teachers' forum. Lestari told me that during this meeting, she would ask the school head and other teachers whether she should increase, decrease, or maintain Santi's and Nining's grades to be written in the report book. Suggestions and input from the other teachers would provide the basis of final decisions on grading. According to Lestari, her grading for Santi and Nining included her evaluation of non-academic aspects of their performance in class rather than just the academic components. She further clarified what she meant by saying her decision to adjust the two students' grades was based on the amount of efforts they put into their learning tasks. The use of effort as a consideration in grading decision has been consistently shown in many studies (see, for example, Isnawati & Saukah, 2017; Randall & Engelhard, 2010; Sun & Cheng, 2014; Tierney, 2015). However, Lestari's emphasis on Santi's and Nining's difficulties understanding the lessons demonstrated her belief that neither student had the level of ability needed to achieve at the same levels as other students who were not labelled as learning-disabled (Randall & Engelhard, 2010).

5.6. Class organisation

Here I describe how way the teachers in my study organised their teaching and learning in their classrooms, such as using a teacher-centred approach

and ability grouping. According to the deviance discourse (Skidmore, 2002, 2004), teaching expertise refers to expertise in teaching built on specialist subject knowledge. The data from my observations and interviews showed that all of the participating teachers worked in accordance with this discourse and used a teacher-centred approach to classroom teaching. In the Indonesian education system, the use of a teacher-centred approach has long been a common practice in classroom culture, where students are seen as passive recipients of knowledge rather than as active actors who produce and construct knowledge (Zulfikar, 2009).

In addition, interaction between Indonesian teachers and students is characterised by hierarchical positionings. Teachers are seen as authorities and are highly respected figures (Liem, Nair, Bernardo, & Prasetya, 2008; Maulana, Opendakker, den Brok, & Bosker, 2011). Some studies claim that Indonesian teachers' relationships with students are distant, directive, and repressive to students (see, for example, Maulana et al., 2011, 2012) and that the classroom learning environment is likely to be influenced by socio-cultural factors such as paternalism and respect for elders (Maulana et al., 2011). However, other studies have presented contradictory findings wherein interactions between Indonesian teachers and students are constructed as cooperative and warm but with the teacher playing the dominant role (Maulana et al., 2012; Tampubolan, Ismail, & Manurung, 2018). Other

characteristics commonly attributed to the Indonesian classroom context are a strong emphasis on obedience to teachers' rules and commands, and on the teachers ensuring their students fulfil expected learning result (Zulfikar, 2013).

Distant relationships between teacher and students were evident in my study. For example, Aminah told me that she received advice from her colleague is a case in point:

One teacher suggests to me that I keep a distance from the students. The main reason is to avoid that they become spoiled ... If I smile, they come close to me. But if I raise my voice, it means that I'm angry or annoyed. None of them will get close to me ... (Field note, School Two)

This "keeping a distance" suggests teachers intentionally maintaining power inequality to gain respect from students. I noticed that the teachers in my study used gestures, such as raising their voices and facial expression to communicate to students closeness to or distance from them. Downer, Rimm-Kaufman, and Pianta (2007) found that the extent of distance in these relationships influenced students' level of engagement in learning activities, an indication of teachers' power to control the learning environment.

From my observations, I could see that teachers exercised authority over their students during most situations in the classroom. Students always

needed to gain permission from their teachers to participate in classroom activities; raising hands before responding to questions from the teacher was a simple example of this. During teaching and learning, the teachers determined how the students should approach tasks and which answers were correct or not. The teachers decided what rules should apply in the class, what could and could not be discussed during learning, and who should speak and how they should speak. On one occasion, for example, observed Aminah informing her students of some rules. Rather than discussing the rules with the students, she decided what rules she would incorporate in her teaching:

“I want you to write in your book ... the rules in this classroom. One, no one is to talk when I talk.... Two, students must pay attention, and your eyes, head, and face must look at the whiteboard, otherwise you won't be able to understand ... you won't be able to understand...” (Field note, School Two)

Aminah emphasised her role in shaping students' identity and the way they should learn by emphasising the behaviours she expected of her students. Her statement of her rules reflects Skidmore's (2002, 2004) *discourse of deviance*, which sees teachers as “experts” and students as passive learners. I often observed Aminah repeating her rules when her students became noisy or could not answer her questions correctly. Sometimes the students reminded one another of the rules before Aminah started teaching. They accepted her rules about how learning should happen and the learning behaviours she wanted to promote as a routine part of classroom practice.

As I mentioned earlier, most of the participating teachers grouped their students according to ability. For example, two teachers arranged the classes according to mixed-ability groupings. Another teacher used ability grouping by separating students labelled as learning disabled from the other students, but still keeping them in the same class, with everyone learning all the taught subjects. In all classrooms, the teachers determined who the students would sit with and where they would sit. Table 5 provides further details about these grouping practices.

The practice of ability grouping was also evident during one of my observations when Wawan and Putri were in Grade 4. During this observation, the two students were sitting with three other students whom Endah, their teacher, considered to be low achieving. Thus, a total of five students were grouped separately from other students. Seating them at position in front of her desk, meant Endah could easily see what they were doing and assist them when needed. I asked Endah why she chose this ability grouping. She replied: “Wawan and Putri need extra attention ... because they definitely are often left behind to finish assignments ... work slower ... get unsatisfactory results”. She also emphasised that Wawan and Putri “need my extra help” (Field note, School Two).

Table 5. Teachers' student-grouping practices in the two schools

School One: No. of students on roll, 120	A small urban public primary school in the inner city. Students were organised into same-age, mixed-ability classes. Teachers determined seating arrangements and students' mobility. The entire curriculum was taught with students in mixed-ability groups.
School Two: No. of students on roll, 90	A small urban public primary school in the inner city. Students were organised into same-age grades. Seating was arranged according to ability grouping when the students labelled as learning disabled were in Grade 4. When they were in Grade 5, the teacher based seating on mixed-ability grouping. Students spent their time in the same group with little flexibility to move. Teachers throughout the school determined seating placements and movements. Mixed-ability grouping was used for the entire curriculum.

Endah's explanation communicated the need for "special" treatment to support Wawan's and Putri's learning. For Endah, their learning difficulties became an indicator for her to treat them differently from the other students. Her perception that Wawan and Putri could not achieve by themselves to justified her decision to position them as special students. Her practice demonstrated that, for her, special students deserve special learning approaches.

Throughout my visits, the students labelled as learning disabled remained in the same group for all lessons in the classroom. They seldom interacted with peers from other wings during learning activities. This was also the case for the peers, who rarely interacted with the students labelled as learning disabled. During group learning, the teacher asked students to work with peers nearby, and it was reasonably common for the students labelled as learning disabled to work together among themselves. When I asked Endah why the students labelled as learning disabled were not grouped with other students, she said that she would “assist them separately by repeating the explanation and instruction ... other students already understand what to do” (Field note, School Two). Endah’s approach indicates that teachers may respond differently from one another to students’ needs, with that response dependent on each teacher’s perception of his or her students’ abilities (Francis et al., 2017).

From Endah’s perspective, segregating students labelled as learning disabled from their peers allowed her to exercise her authority to ensure that students labelled as learning disabled could participate in the mainstream curriculum. Although she did not explicitly mention that these students’ difficulties in learning were individually based, she approached their difficulties in accordance with the deficit thinking that focuses on the inherent limitation of cognitive ability (Skidmore, 2002, 2004). In attributing

students labelled as learning disabled' difficulties to low ability, she was likely to have low expectations for them and thus use a different teaching approach with them. This finding receives support from Woodcock and Jiang (2018), who found that Australian trainee teachers' perception of the ability level of students labelled as learning disabled was a contributing factor in their lower academic expectations of these students.

Furthermore, by purposefully setting her students labelled as learning disabled in a visible classroom arrangement, Endah not only separated them from other students but also emphasised their difference from the other students in the class (Boaler, Wiliam, & Brown, 2000; Hamilton & O'Hara, 2011; Murphy, 1998). The practice of ability grouping seemed to justify her assumption that students have fixed levels of ability and "needed to be taught accordingly" (Boaler et al., 2000, p. 631).

The other teachers in the two schools also thought that mixed-ability grouping would help students labelled as learning disabled learn better because they would be learning from their peers, as Aminah explained to me:

"I locate my students in a mixed arrangement. The smarts sit with the non-smarts ... so the smart [students] can teach the non-smart [students] ..." (Interview, Aminah, School Two)

This approach often occurred when the students labelled as learning disabled were experiencing difficulties with particular curriculum subjects.

After the teacher explains a topic of multiplication in front of the class ... she gazes around the class and looks at some students who sit next to Wawan and Putri, and gives this instruction, “Okay, then, Student 3, Student 4 ..., check Wawan and Putri ... *Make sure they understand what I’ve just explained.*” [emphasis added] ... Student 3 starts to talk with Wawan, and Student 4 is talking to Putri ... Student 4 asks Putri, “Do you get it? Do you get it?” (Field note, School Two)

These two excerpts show that the practice of mixed-ability grouping seemed to legitimise the position of students labelled as learning disabled, who were constructed as less knowledgeable in a particular curriculum area than their peers. This practice also emphasised the teachers’ justification for treating the students labelled as learning disabled differently by highlighting the assumption that these students needed to rely on their peers for their learning. Consequently, teachers are unlikely to encourage these students to engage in joint knowledge production with their peers (Skidmore, 2002, 2004) because the relationship between them and their peer “teachers” limits their potential contributions and participations from the learning activities. From their studies of ability grouping in secondary schools in the UK, Ireson, Hallam, and Hurley (2005) and Ireson and Hallam (2005) found that because students labelled as learning disabled were less valued in the classroom

because of their low academic achievement, they did not have a voice. That lack of voice included not being offered opportunities to engage in discussions. These findings also point to the unequal relationship between students labelled as learning disabled and peers arising out of the assumption that students labelled as learning disabled will learn better under the supervision of their peers.

According to some of the teachers in my study, allocating students to particular learning arrangements has a positive influence students' learning. Ireson, Hallam, and Plewis (2001) point out that seating arrangement can also reflect teachers' expectations of students. Two of the teachers in this current study explained that finding an appropriate seating composition for students labelled as learning disabled was not easy because they (the teachers) had to predict how a particular seating arrangement would influence the students' learning. The teachers said they had to experiment with the seating composition until the arrangement enhanced learning for students labelled as learning disabled and met the teachers' expectations for the students' achievement. During my observations, the two teachers changed the setting arrangement at least once a week. One time, I observed Aminah changing the composition on finding the students labelled as learning disabled had received bad marks in maths.

Before the new lesson started, the teacher calls on five students to come to the front; two of them are Wawan and Putri ... The teacher tells them in front of the class, "I will change your setting again, especially for these students ... The teacher mentions the names of the five students and asks them to sit with new peers. "Wawan ... you sit with (Student 3). Putri ... you sit here," while pointing to a chair in the second right row. The teacher then talks to me ... "These five students have bad grades, so I think I need to rearrange their seating, you know ... so they will improve and [they] can have better grades." (Field note, Aminah, School Two)

Aminah's decision to change the seating composition of the students labelled as learning disabled was probably based on her belief that students labelled as learning disabled are likely to depend on other students to support their learning performance. The above extract also indirectly indicates that Aminah tended to share responsibility with several peers for teaching the students labelled as learning disabled, as she made her decision known to the whole class. Her instructions regarding placement of the students labelled as learning disabled in the class likely communicated to the other students that the students labelled as learning disabled were unlikely to achieve, but that seating them with peers who could assist them gave them a chance of raising their academic achievement.

Different views on ability grouping

Three of the four teachers had varying opinions about the influence of ability grouping on student achievements. For example, Lestari seemed to think that

placing students labelled as learning disabled in ability groupings could hinder peers from progressing and adversely influence the latter students' rate of learning.

“Learning should be [faster]; the other students can learn fast, but because [I] have to deal with [students labelled as learning disabled], the other [students] also become slow.” (Interview, Lestari, School One)

For Lestari, students labelled as learning disabled were likely to hinder other students' pace of learning. The presence of students labelled as learning disabled in her classroom seemed to disrupt her belief that “learning should be faster” and that she therefore had to adjust her standard about how learning should be in order to accommodate the students labelled as learning disabled.

Aminah, however, saw arranging her students in a mixed-ability grouping as “effective” because students could “check each other's work” to ensure “no one is left behind” (Field note, School Two). For her, a mixed-ability grouping was helpful, assuming that the presence of peers alongside the students labelled as learning disabled would help the students labelled as learning disabled keep up and thus ensure all the students were effectively engaged in the lesson (Florian & Beaton, 2018).

Conversely, Endah regarded positioning students labelled as learning disabled separately from other students as helpful because separating them would “prevent students labelled as learning disabled from making a noise ... [and would] help improve their grading” (Field note, School Two). She saw ability groupings as a means of “controlling” the students labelled as learning disabled’s learning-related behaviours and achievements. She also realised, as her comment in the following extract shows, that the other students were reluctant to be positioned with the students labelled as learning disabled because they would interpret this arrangement as students labelled as learning disabled having the same “quality” as them:

“... but [the student] almost refuses it because he thinks that he is classified as stupid when sitting with [students labelled as learning disabled]” (Field note, School Two)

Endah assumed that other students correlated seating arrangement with identity as learning-disabled and would not want to sit with students labelled as learning disabled. These findings about the teachers’ seating-arrangement preferences show that the practice of ability grouping was the teachers’ deliberate way of accommodating learning difference within the classroom system. This practice, not only reflected assumptions about learning and teaching but also reinforced negative judgements about ability (Hamilton & O’Hara, 2011).

The practice of placing the students labelled as learning disabled in specified seating arrangements within the classroom clearly communicated their ability status to teachers and peers, as Putri mentioned:

Putri: I'm sitting in the same group with Wawan.

Costrie: What do you mean?

Putri: That's a group for those who have difficulties ...
because we can't.

(Field note, School Two)

The students labelled as learning disabled seemed to be aware of their seating position and what it meant within the hierarchy of ability (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). Their position also legitimated their identity as to what group they belonged to. The peers also showed their understanding of what being in a lower position within a hierarchy meant. One of them had this to say:

“... the left wing ... only for [learning-disabled] students ... they are stupid! Slow thinkers! Yet they understand the lessons ...” (Field note, School Two)

Being in “the left wing” represented the characteristics attached to the students labelled as learning disabled. Because this position constructed students' success and failure in terms of where they were located in the seating arrangement, it signified different levels of social status among the students. This finding resonates with one the findings in a study conducted by

Hallam, Ireson, and Davies (2004), namely, that students were very aware of their position within the class hierarchy.

Movement within the seating arrangements

In both participating schools, most students were aware of seating-system practices based on ability because their teachers communicated the seating arrangement in the classrooms to them. The students also knew that movement could happen on the basis of academic achievement, but were less clear about the criteria governing movement. They knew that students labelled as learning disabled were likely to move to sit with students who were at the “top” of the achievement hierarchy:

Aminah calls students who got low maths grades to the front. She explains to her students: “I will change the seating again. These students will sit with a new seating partner. Aminah starts to call them: “Putri ... you sit with Student 4...” Aminah looks at Student 4, saying, “It’s okay, Student 4. You can teach Putri ... Wawan ... you sit next to Student 3”. (Field note, School Two)

Aminah often used the practice of changing seatmate as her strategy for helping Wawan and Putri when they had not done well or not shown improvement in their learning. Aminah asked them to sit with various peers whom she believed could help them. She assigned their peers with responsibilities that she thought would assist Wawan and Putri. She emphasised that they “will improve and they can have better grades when I

rearrange their seatmate” (Field note, Aminah, School Two). Her practice of positioning the students labelled as learning disabled with the more capable students so as to help the students labelled as learning disabled meet her learning expectations for the class (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Hallam et al., 2004) had become a legitimised way of maintaining social inequality amongst students (Janmaat, 2011), even though she probably did not intend this outcome.

Seating and expectations

For the students labelled as learning disabled, the practice of ability grouping generally meant low participation with their peers and low expectations of their ability. My observations of lessons identified a wide range of experiences relating to seating for the students labelled as learning disabled, including being ignored by peers when needing help, being humiliated when giving an incorrect answer, being underestimated when giving a correct response, and being considered a hindrance to others. The following extract captures all of these:

The teacher asks the students to work in groups ... Putri asks Student 9 whether her answer is right.

Putri: What do you think about my answer? Is it correct?

Student 9: Think yourself!

Putri is silent and continues her work.

(Field note, School Two)

Student 9, Putri's peer refused to respond to Putri's request, leaving Putri with limited opportunity to learn from her peer. This incident aligns with one of the findings from a study by Boaler et al. (2000), in which peers seemed to limit opportunities for students labelled as learning disabled to learn.

The teachers also played a role in creating negative learning experiences for the students labelled as learning disabled, as described in my note below:

The next topic is about animal anatomy. The teacher asks the students to write 20 questions as a group task. Before she dictates the questions, she asks all the students:

Aminah: What is another name of worm?

Wawan: It's Vermes!

Aminah: [loudly] Yes, you're right! It's Vermes. Wawan ... I *can't believe* [emphasis added] you're clever.

(Field note, School Two)

Teachers' and peers' low expectations of the students labelled as learning disabled played out in their interactions with them. The students labelled as learning disabled were not expected to answer questions seemingly directed to peers, let alone answer them correctly. For teacher and peer alike, understandings about learning disabilities as fixed disabilities influenced their reactions to students labelled as learning disabled even when they showed

effort to learn, thus communicating to those students a sense of marginalisation and distrust (Janmaat, 2011).

5.7. Curriculum model

The data revealed that all participating teachers in this study did not adapt their curriculum to meet the needs of students labelled as learning disabled. When asked whether they adapted the curriculum to their students, one of the participants said: “I don’t differentiate the task. I don’t have time to differentiate the task ... so all students do the same task” (Field note, Aminah, School Two). Time constraints seemed to be a concern for all the teachers, as they strove to ensure lessons finished on time, as scheduled, rather than attend to the different learning needs of the students, an approach that required teachers to be well prepared in advance for making such accommodations. My observation data supported provided considerable evidence of teachers requiring all students to learn the same curriculum in the same way. An example follows:

The teacher asks the students to write calculation questions. The teacher writes five questions on the whiteboard. Then she tells them: “All of you have to answer these questions now and individually! Some students use multiplication tables, some use their fingers to help them count.” (Field note, School One)

While the teacher in this excerpt offered an adaptive tool (multiplication tables or fingers) to help students do the task, she did not modify it in any way to suit different learning needs. As she said to me on another occasion, “... same task for all students... no difference”, suggesting she rarely if ever made practised task modification when teaching. This finding is in line with findings from several other studies that showed teachers in regular classrooms making no effort to adapt the curriculum to the needs of students with intellectual disabilities and learning disabilities (see, for example, Otukile-Mongwaketse, Mangope, & Kuyini, 2016; Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2001).

Two of the teachers in School One did, however, practise remediation with students the identified as experiencing learning problems (including students labelled as learning disabled) because their grades were below the KKM standards. My interviews with these two teachers revealed that they thought that the time allocated for lessons was insufficient for teaching students labelled as learning disabled. They had therefore decided to teach students labelled as learning disabled and several other low-achieving students at a separate time. Lestari, for example, said: “They can’t finish the task during the class time, so I give more time for additional lesson ... an extra time to study” (Interview, Lestari, School One).

The students labelled as learning disabled joined the teachers' remedial teaching sessions every day. These sessions took place outside the allocated school time and were one-and-a-half hours in length. The purpose of these sessions was to help the students learn basic skills such as calculation. During one of her maths remediation sessions, Lestari attempted to assist Santi and Nining with a topic on multiplication that she had taught earlier in the classroom. She explained the task again to Santi and Nining and then asked them to do a similar task. She also helped Santi and Nining while they did the task, such as "giving an example [of how to answer)], asking them to copy what I do, then checking how they do it ... making sure that they do exactly as I told them" (Interview, Lestari, School One).

For Lestari, the remedial teaching had a corrective function. Her aim was to help Santi and Nining produce better learning by providing them with intensive, structured instruction (Opitz et al., 2017). She also used drilling to "help familiarise them with simple multiplication" and enabled them to master the basic skills that students need to access advanced skills (Interview, Lestari, School One). These practices align with Skidmore's description of remedial teaching as "mechanical exercises" through repetitive activities (Skidmore, 2002, p. 123). Before Santi and Nining began remediation tasks, Lestari would slowly explain to them how they should approach the tasks. Sometimes, she wrote down an answer for them and accompanied it with

explanations of the steps they needed to take to reach that answer. She then asked them to copy down what she had written. Lestari told me why she provided remediation sessions:

Remediation is important because these students have not reached the minimum mastery criteria ... Others can do the task, but ... Santi and Nining make mistakes all the time.
(Interview, Lestari, School One)

Lestari used remediation as a strategy to deal with Santi's and Nining's weaknesses because she saw their failure arising out of their deficiency in mastering basic skills. That deficiency meant they could not obtain the minimum competence levels set down in the KKM criteria. One of the maths remediation sessions I observed showed Lestari asking Santi and Nining to memorise multiplication. She gave them the multiplication tables for numbers 1 to 10 and asked them to memorise them. When they were unable to do this, Lestari emphasised this result and asked them to repeat the memorisation task.

While Lestari might have thought that students labelled as learning disabled could learn better under circumstances adjusted to their pace of learning and focused on the areas of learning they found difficult, she was still expecting them acquire the levels of ability in basic skills prescribed in the curriculum (Skidmore, 2002, 2004). She, like the other teachers in my

study, appeared to believe that students labelled as learning disabled could not acquire basic skills in regular schools because they could not keep up with the learning tasks and would always lag behind their peers. Their practice of remedial education provided no more than “a repetitive diet of mechanical exercises” (Skidmore, 2004, p. 116) and accorded with the discourse of deviance. It also centred on a narrowed version of the curriculum because the teachers believed students labelled as learning disabled could not learn the regular curriculum. For them, the source of learning problems of the students labelled as learning disabled’ was due to a weakness within them, and although the teachers provided remedial education, there was evidence in the data of them viewing this practice as ineffective because students labelled as learning disabled would still be unlikely to learn.

In contrast, the teachers in School Two did not use remedial teaching for students with learning issues. Endah considered remediation ineffective for students labelled as learning disabled because they took such a long time to learn; in other words, remediation would be a waste of time. She also thought that remediation should not be used to teach basic material because “the basics should have been mastered in the early grades ... remediation does not help when it’s given at this (fourth) grade” (Interview, Endah, School Two). Instead of using remedial teaching with students labelled as learning disabled, Aminah preferred to give additional lessons to all students because

she believed that such a practice “is more effective in helping students labelled as learning disabled get assistance on basic skills they do not yet understand ... [than] teaching them separately step by step” (Field note, School Two). She thought students labelled as learning disabled would more readily learn basic skills if they worked alongside other students and not apart from them.

The different views of the teachers from the two schools indicate that teachers can have different views of the benefit of remedial teaching for students labelled as learning disabled, and that these views can influence teachers in their decision to provide remedial teaching or not. However, this finding also shows that the teachers’ thoughts on the value of remedial teaching rested on their views about whether students labelled as learning disabled would indeed learn through this approach. While differences in learning ability among the students in their classrooms did influence teachers’ pedagogical thinking and practices, it was apparent that both continued to be underpinned by the assumption of students having innate, unchanging abilities.

5.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I described the classroom practices that the teachers initiated, maintained, and communicated to their students. The practices had the potential to challenge and motivate some students to achieve through the provision of adequate learning opportunities, but at the same time the teachers' delivery of those opportunities risked demotivating students and decreasing their engagement, and this was especially so for those students considered to be learning-disabled.

The teachers' grouping of students according to ability in the classroom likely upheld the existence of ability hierarchy between students and did not always promote students labelled as learning disabled' participation in learning activities. In reality, the practice seemed to justify emphasising student inequality on the basis of ability and to legitimate students' positions within the education system, in which smart students receive more privilege than students labelled as learning disabled due to their status in knowledge production and reproduction.

Some of the reasons the teachers gave for educational failures among students labelled as learning disabled were low socioeconomic status, limited family support, and self-fulfilling prophecy. The teachers thinking with regard to self-fulfilling prophecy was that low socioeconomic status and lack

of family support fed into their low ability and because all of these were intrinsic aspects of the students, they could not learn, so effort to help them would serve little use. Finally, the dominant role of the teachers in the classroom meant they determined what and how learning was and how it should be attained, and therefore it was they who determined how it should be delivered and assessed.

In the next chapter, Chapter Six, I turn my attention to the opportunities and barriers to participation in communities of learners that the students labelled as learning disabled were experiencing in their classrooms. I look at how the teachers tried to facilitate these students' participation and the extent to which this effort was succeeding.

Chapter Six: Learning and participation for students labelled as learning disabled

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I apply Black-Hawkins' (2010) *Framework for Participation* as an analytical tool to guide the exploration of my findings. This chapter aims to address the third sub-question on barriers encountered by students labelled as learning disabled in the Indonesian public primary classrooms. I explore similarities and differences in the values, beliefs, and behaviours of teachers and peers in the context of their responses to students labelled as learning disabled. I also explore barriers to learning and participation for students labelled as learning disabled, and the underpinning practices that shape these barriers.

6.2. The Framework for Participation

Black-Hawkins' (2010) *Framework for Participation* was of significant use in examining the data presented in this chapter because it supports investigation of the practices and interactions between teachers and students that influence the culture of schools. I surmised that the presence of students labelled as learning disabled in the classroom creates complexity for teachers because of them potentially having to orchestrate their practices to ensure that

all students achieve. I also suspected that teachers' beliefs about and views of students labelled as learning disabled could influence these students' level of participation in class activities, because those beliefs could determine whether the teachers created or limited the students' opportunities to participate in learning. I decided that exploring the complexities in the day-to-day teaching experiences of the teachers in my study might provide better understanding of how teachers appear to support or inhibit students labelled as learning disabled' participation in learning.

The *Framework for Participation* consists of three main elements that are related to one another. They are participation and access, participation and collaboration, and participation and diversity (Black-Hawkins, 2002, 2010). *Participation and access* refers to the opportunities students have to access learning. For Black-Hawkins (2010), participation and access simply means "being there" (p. 32). The elements of participation and access relevant to the physical presence of students labelled as learning disabled encompass joining the school, staying in the school, access to spaces and places, and access to the curriculum.

Participation and collaboration is about acknowledging each student's contribution in enriching other students' learning through shared knowledge, experiences, and expertise. According to Black-Hawkins (2010),

participation and collaboration comprises learning alongside other students, supporting students to learn together, staff members working together, staff and students working together, and schools and other institutions working together.

Participation and diversity refers to recognising and accepting students' differences as strengths rather than as a threat or weakness for teachers and students. It focuses on recognition and acceptance of students by staff, recognition and acceptance of staff by staff, and recognition and acceptance of students by students (Black-Hawkins, 2010).

I thought that having students labelled as learning disabled learn alongside their peers in the classroom might challenge my participating teachers to accommodate the needs of students labelled as learning disabled so that these students could achieve and participate in learning. The teachers in my study certainly felt pressure to ensure that all students met the learning competencies specified in the curriculum (see Chapter Four and Five). However, they did not always achieve this. Their response seemed to be to give more opportunities to those students they thought would achieve while limiting opportunities of students labelled as learning disabled to achieve and participate in learning. The Participation Framework allowed me to explore the contexts in which my participating students labelled as learning disabled

appeared to experience barriers to learning and participation. In section 6.3 onwards, I discuss how I utilised the framework for analysing and interpreting the data relevant to this matter.

6.3. Learning accessibility

The first element of the *Framework for Participation* that I used concerned the presence of students labelled as learning disabled in the classroom. Black-Hawkins (2002, 2010) describes this element as a physical space in which students labelled as learning disabled in the class have access to the curriculum. I considered two aspects of participation and access derived from Black-Hawkins (2010). These were joining the school and access to the curriculum. Joining the school referred to those parts of my data relating to the intake of students labelled as learning disabled in regular schools. I defined access to the curriculum as limited opportunities for students labelled as learning disabled to participate, receive teachers' support, and exercise knowledge and skills during learning tasks.

The enrolment process in public primary schools in Indonesia is nationally and locally regulated via an online, zone-based system. Kristina, the school head from School One, explained to me that this enrolment process meant that schools cannot choose students and but have to accept children from within the schools' respective zones, regardless of the

children's backgrounds, such as socioeconomic status and ability. For Kristina, this enrolment system posed a problem, and that was lack of information about the enrolled children's cognitive capacity, so for her they were either "stupid" or "smart" (Interview, Kristina, School One). Deciding whether a student was stupid or smart was based entirely on her evaluation. She told me that before the current enrolment system, when schools were involved in selecting students for enrolment, teachers generally had an opportunity to at least glance at information about prospective students, such as whether "the child can understand instruction or not". Kristina's explanation reflected the extent to which her school highly valued students' learning potential.

The other teachers in my study also made comments showing their understanding that the current enrolment system required schools to accept all students regardless of their backgrounds. However, the teachers tended to have different perspectives about the advisability of incorporating students with disabilities in regular schools. For example, while Lestari from School One knew that her school could not refuse any children entitled to attend the school, she did not agree with the enrolment policy that required inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. "[They] should be in a special school," she said (Interview, Lestari, School One). Also, while she seemed to endorse the idea of regular schools accommodating all children, she appeared

to see students with disabilities as separate from “all children”. She expressed the opinion that students with disabilities, including those labelled as learning disabled, learn better alongside other students with similar conditions and that special teachers are better trained than regular teachers to work with students with disabilities. Her dichotomy about “special” and “regular” schools indicated her belief that regular schools are designed for able students because teachers in these schools are not trained to teach students with disabilities. According to her, students labelled as learning disabled should never be eligible for enrolment in regular schools because these schools could not meet these students’ learning needs.

According to the information from my teacher participants, the four students labelled as learning disabled in my study had been enrolled in the same way as their peers. Their enrolment in the schools was mainly determined by age, which met with the criteria governing entry to regular schools (see Chapter One). There was no indication that the schools encouraged the enrolment of students labelled as learning disabled by indicating the school was open to enrolling them.

6.3.1. Different learning opportunities

The four students labelled as learning disabled in this study learned alongside their peers. During my observations in School One and School Two, these

students learned together with peers in the same classroom using the same textbooks, tasks, and methods. My observation data also showed that the four were often left behind during learning tasks and had limited support to access the curriculum in some lessons. This situation was particularly evident for core subjects, such as maths and language. The teachers explained tasks and task materials to all students and used the same teaching strategies when teaching them something about the task. The way the students were to learn was therefore generally dominated by the teachers. The teaching strategies the teachers used were typically those they saw as working for the majority of students: asking, explaining, dictating, and writing on the whiteboard.

For example, during a maths lesson, Lestari wrote some multiplication formulae on the whiteboard. She explained how to complete the multiplication that involved a series of numbers in front of the class. She showed the steps involved in the counting process, such as pointing out which numbers should be multiplied. At the end of her explanation, she asked her students to copy what she had written on the board and asked the students to practise what she had shown them by doing some exercises. Instead of using various approaches to her teaching to ensure all the students in the class understood, she used a one-size-fits-all strategy. The other participating teachers also taught this way. While this approach was likely to benefit the learning of some students, it risked excluding others, such as the students

labelled as learning disabled, from accessing the curriculum, and therefore presented a potential barrier to participation in learning. The one-size-fits-all approach also showed the teachers' tendency not to facilitate the learning of students in need of different teaching and learning approaches.

On another occasion, Lestari nominated Santi, a student labelled as learning disabled, to answer a language-related task on understanding diversity. Lestari asked Santi to determine what comprised physical and non-physical characteristics. Lestari repeated her question three times, but Santi did not respond:

Lestari asks to Santi to read her answer ... Lestari repeats her question: "Santi, what characteristic is visible to see? Is it physics or trait? What is your answer, Santi?" ... Lestari repeats her question for the third time: "What can you see clearly, physics or trait?" Lestari looks at Santi again, saying, "Come on, Santi, what is your answer? What can you see with your eyes? Physics or trait?" (Field note, School One)

Lestari's question to Santi contained basic information, which was followed by hints as to the right answer, such as providing choices. Lestari explicitly mentioned two choices between "physics" and "trait", so that Santi could answer the question. Lestari did not seem to accommodate Santi's learning by clarifying with Santi whether she understood the meaning of physics and trait and how these terms could be applied. The way Lestari

asked the questions seemed to focus on Santi's ability to memorise basic knowledge rather than to enhance Santi's knowledge.

My observations showed that Lestari tended to treat learning-disabled and peers differently during learning activities. For example, she was less likely to nominate Santi and Nining than their peers to respond to a question or give a brief summary of a previous lesson. When she did call on them, she often challenged them to produce answers, as with the above example. As a result, the peers tended to receive more experiences in learning than the students labelled as learning disabled. The above example also points to alignment between Lestari's understandings about students labelled as learning disabled' ability and the depth of knowledge she gave them during classroom interactions. Her apparent perception of these students' ability level contributed to how the students labelled as learning disabled had access to the curriculum in the classroom (Snell & Lefstein, 2018).

One teacher who did promote learning opportunities for her students labelled as learning disabled was Annisa, from School One. However, the way she did this had the contrary effect of minimising their participation in learning. On several occasions, I witnessed her efforts to accommodate these students in a way she thought would help them participate and achieve. She confirmed this intention during my interview with her, when I asked her how

she handled students labelled as learning disabled during her teaching: “I give them more time to finish their task ... giving them another time after learning is over” (Interview, Annisa, School One). Allocating more time made it easier, she said, for the students to participate in the classroom life, and showed that Annisa had some appreciation that all students can “progress, learn, and achieve” (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 825) if they are allowed to learn at their own pace. Annisa’s practice seemed to uphold the concept of inclusion in the discourse of inclusion described by Skidmore (2002, 2004) and in inclusive pedagogy (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), wherein teachers respond to student diversity by facilitating learning opportunities that meet the learning needs of individual students.

However, Annisa’s teaching practice also limited learning opportunities for the students labelled as learning disabled when she decided what learning materials were suitable for them. Her decision to treat them differently was based on her low expectations of Santi and Nining:

“[What I give them] depends on their ability. I will not force them ... what matters for me is that they can copy and write.”
(Interview, Annisa, School One)

The task Annisa gave them was one that she knew her students labelled as learning disabled would not be able to accomplish but would help them master basic skills. Her thinking here links to the discourse of deviance

(Skidmore, 2002, 2004) because she expected the students labelled as learning disabled would be able to do no more than acquire some competence in basic skills. Her attitude was also rooted in and shaped by the “template of ability” (Hart et al., 2004, p. 22), by which students are categorised and treated accordingly.

The above two examples indicate that while teachers might apply different discourses to students labelled as learning disabled based on task difficulty level, they may avoid giving them what they perceive to be high-level academic tasks because they believe these students will not be able to accomplish them. Annisa’s choice of learning opportunity for Santi and Nining appeared to be based on her deterministic belief about their abilities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

6.3.2. Learning (dis)engagement

Three of the four students labelled as learning disabled frequently seemed not to participate in a task. My observation notes described situations where they were likely to be off task. Their lack of disengagement could have been because they were not interested in the lesson or because they did not understand how to approach the task. For example, I observed Nining, when the majority of students in her class were working on a given task, to be passive and disengaged with the assigned task:

During the language lesson, instead of doing the assigned task of retelling a poem, Nining draws in her exercise book ... putting her head on the desk ... looking at her teacher ... looking at her exercise book again ... watching her peers and playing with her pen ... Nining keeps looking at her book ... does not do it [the task]. Then Nining looks at the teacher, who continues working on her laptop ... (Field note, School One)

When I asked Nining why she did not do the task, she replied that she did not know how to approach it. She told me, “I don’t understand how to do it” (Informal interview, Nining, School One). Her response reflected her uncertainty over how to do the task found expression in her disengaged behaviours.

Santi, Nining’s classmate labelled as learning disabled, also showed her passivity when she was unable to do a task that potentially minimised her opportunity to access the curriculum. When I asked Santi why she did not ask for assistance from the teacher when she experienced difficulty, she emphasised her teacher’s instruction as her reason for not asking for assistance:

“I don’t want to ask Miss Lestari ... It’s not polite. I won’t ask her [for help] ... No ... I won’t ask [for help] ... You are not supposed to ask [other students].” (Interview, Santi, School One)

Santi refused to ask for assistance from her teacher or peers because to do so would mean, for her, not obeying the teacher's instruction. At the end of the lesson, Santi left her task unfinished.

Instead of trying to contribute ideas about what the class was learning or answer questions, the students labelled as learning disabled often relied on their teachers' and peers' responses to provide responses and the correct answers. When I asked them why they did not want to answer their teachers' questions, the answer Putri gave was indicative of what they all said: "I think my answer is wrong" (Interview, Putri, School Two). Her assumption seemed to be that of her teachers and peers being more knowledgeable than she was. On one occasion, Putri demonstrated her doubt about how to do the task when her teacher nominated her to answer it. Putri told me of her anxiety at this point and at other such times when she thought she would not perform well, or could not do the task:

"I'm embarrassed about making a mistake." (Field note, Putri, School Two)

Putri was scared to make a mistake because she thought it would communicate her lack of ability rather than show her understanding about the topic to her teacher and peers about.

This finding supports findings in several other studies on Indonesian students' anxieties about practising their English skills (see, for example, Anandari, 2015; Marcellino, 2008). Anandari (2015) noted that the main emotions underlying student anxiety were fear, shyness, and discomfort. During my observations in both schools, teachers appeared to instruct their students in ways directed towards minimising making mistakes. When students produced incorrect answers, the teachers usually reprimanded them publicly by reminding that they (the teachers) had explained the topic previously. This response from the teacher doubtless created pressure for all students, not just the students labelled as learning disabled, to do the task correctly. Students were therefore likely to minimise the risk of making mistakes by avoiding the task or cheating. As mentioned before, the students in my study were always expected to abide by the teachers' expectations of them and their responses to tasks.

The students labelled as learning disabled were also likely to avoid any opportunities to do the task in front of the class, again because they wanted to minimise the consequences of making mistakes. The student labelled as learning disabled, Wawan, for example, refused to write his answer on the whiteboard when Endah, his teacher, asked him to. He repeated his response, "I can't," three times, indicative of his tendency to avoid situations likely to expose his learning weaknesses to teachers and peers. This finding resonates

with a study conducted by Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni, and O'Regan (2009). They found that ethnic minority students avoided answering questions when they were in large groups of whole class situations because they did not want to risk being wrong and consequently teased by their peers.

My data often showed that because making mistakes was an unpleasant learning experience for the students labelled as learning disabled, they avoided engagement in learning tasks. This avoidance presented barriers to participation for these students because it hampered them from acquiring the skills and strategies necessary to access the curriculum (Fletcher et al., 2009). It also limited their opportunities to clarify and exercise their understanding of a sphere of learning.

I did witness a moment though, when one of the students labelled as learning disabled, Putri, tried to resist the dominant discourse and position herself as she wanted to be viewed. For example, during a maths lesson, her teacher, Endah, gave the peers an opportunity to answer the question. When none of the peers responded to the teacher's request, Putri signalled that she would answer it:

Endah (looking at Putri): "Wait! Maybe there's another student who wants to do it. Otherwise, you can do it if no one does it." In the end, Endah allows Putri to answer the task on the whiteboard, as no other students come forward. (Field note, School Two)

Endah seemed to expect only the peers would have been able do the task and to position Putri as the last alternative when none of the peers responded to the teacher's request. In the end, the teacher allowed Putri to answer the question correctly. She appeared to be confident when offering herself to answer the question. In this example, the teacher not only determined and controlled Putri's level of participation but also inhibited her learning experience.

Of the four students labelled as learning disabled, Wawan was the one most likely to be outspoken when the teacher asked questions. Wawan often nominated himself to do a task, which showed his enthusiasm for participating in learning. My observation notes captured moments when Wawan actively drew the teachers' attention to himself, by saying "Me... Miss, I want to answer it" (Field note, School Two) each time the teachers offered an opportunity for the students to try to do the exercise in front of the class. Wawan smiled when the teacher invited him to do the task. He made frequent comments to the teacher when his peer's answers differed to his. He usually made remark to the class to indicate that there were things to clarify, by saying "Miss... the answer is different to mine. How come this happen?" when his answer was different from his peer's calculation (Fieldnote, School Two). This caused the teacher and some of his peers responded to his

comment. Although his answer was not considered as not correct, this finding showed his initiative to contribute in learning.

He also frequently clarified his answer with the teacher, especially when he was certain that his answer was similar to his peers' answer. When he did not understand or did not feel confident of his answer, he was most likely to be silent, but if an answer he gave was not correct, he asked his teacher to show him his mistake. For example, on one occasion Wawan nominated himself to answer a task about the greatest common divisor, but once he had done so, the teacher confirmed that his answer was incorrect. The teacher asked him to revise his answer. He went silent and looked at his answer and then the teacher. Apparently confused, he next asked his teacher to show him his mistake. His teacher told him what it was in front of his classmates. During the explanation, Wawan seemed to focus on the teacher's information. On ending her explanation, the teacher asked Wawan to continue revising his answer, and this time he got it correct.

One of the interesting findings in relation to this incident is that there seemed to be a gender-stereotype issue associated with the students labelled as learning disabled' access to the curriculum, although admittedly Wawan was the only male learning-disabled student in my study. In my study, Wawan was the only male labelled as learning disabled. When Wawan

openly acknowledged his learning problem and asked his teacher to show his mistake, she responded by providing him with more information and strategies to approach the task. In comparison, the three girls in my study who were labelled as learning disabled, Santi, Nining, and Putri, were frequently passive and silent. It is possible that the achievement and learning participation of the students labelled as learning disabled' in my study was influenced by their gender (Francis, 2010; Jones, 2005; Jones & Myhill, 2004; Myhill & Jones, 2006; Shain, 2010), which had the potential for another form of achievement inequality. A study by Islam and Asadullah (2018) on gender stereotypes in four developing countries found that gender constructions tended to elicit particular learning behaviours: sometimes these supported one gender and marginalised the other from achieving. Cultural context could therefore have within it different expectations of academic achievement by boys and by girls. In a patriarchal culture like Indonesia, males receive more value than females in society. Males are required to be more active than females (Hidayat, 2011). This finding in my study calls for further investigation to determine if and how gender stereotyping influences teachers' and students' views of students labelled as learning disabled's learning, participation, and achievement.

6.3.3. Lack of teacher support

During my observations at both schools, all teachers often instructed their students to do their tasks individually. The teachers also did not advise their students to ask for teacher assistance when they could not understand a learning task. When the students were unsure about how they should answer, the teacher reminded them, through statements such as this one: “I explained this topic yesterday you should be able to answer this” (Field note, Lestari, School One). This type of response indicated that the teachers seldom provided follow-up support for learning and that once they had explained something, they expected their students to learn by themselves. As a result, most students seemed to prefer asking their peers rather than their teachers for assistance when they had difficulty learning.

This study also showed that students labelled as learning disabled were likely to receive less support than their non-learning-disabled peers from teachers to participate in learning. In most situations, the teachers asked peers to help students labelled as learning disabled when they experienced task difficulty. For example, Lestari asked another student to help Nining, a student labelled as learning disabled, who could not finish the multiplication task, as noted:

Lestari: “Who can help Nining?” None of the students respond to Lestari’s request. She then pinpoints Student 5 to help Nining. Lestari: “Can you help Nining?” (Field note, School One)

On this occasion, Lestari had no direct involvement in support Nining to participate in learning. Her minimum engagement with Nining appeared to show her intent to limit her interaction, but it was not clear at this time why she did not help Nining.

This apparent failure not only on Lestari’s part but also that of the other teachers to develop and facilitate conditions that could support meaningful learning collaboration between their students suggests another barrier limiting students labelled as learning disabled’ experience of mutually respectful interactions with their peers. It also supports the notion that the teachers’ responses to students’ different needs was simply to instruct and provide no further clarification or support for those students who had not yet grasped the relevant concepts. Yet again, the teachers’ perceptions of what teaching and learning constitutes appeared to influence the teachers’ generally minimal interactions with the students, and especially the students labelled as learning disabled. These perceptions limit not only teachers’ efforts and efficacy to provide teaching practices fully supportive of student learning, but also students’ opportunities to learn, achieve, and participate (Sharma et al., 2012). By not attending to and facilitating the various learning

needs of all students, the teachers undermined possibilities for inclusive pedagogical practice.

Aminah (teacher) also often chose to involve peers to help Wawan and Putri when they did not understand her explanation. She usually assigned their seatmates to teach them the task and check their understanding. During one peer tutorial session, Aminah walked around the class, glancing at her students' activity. When I asked her later why she did not help Wawan and Putri but assigned that role to their classmates, she replied, "They learn better with their peers than with me" (Field note, School Two). Giving peers the responsibility for helping the students labelled as learning disabled seemed to be a common part of teachers' strategies to provide support to students labelled as learning disabled.

At School One and School Two, the students in each class were mixed in terms of age, gender, religion, and ability. Lestari voiced recognition from all the participating teachers that their classes represented student diversity. "[It was] impossible," she said, "to have homogeneous students in public schools" (Interview, Lestari, School One). All of the teachers admitted that the diversity in their classes was a challenge during their teaching. They noted in particular that the students labelled as learning disabled were likely to be left behind because teachers had to keep up with

the academic schedule. The focus on meeting competence standards (see Chapter One) created tensions for the teachers because educational policy and regulations required them to focus on academic achievement rather than on meeting the diverse learning needs of diverse students. As Lestari said, “I have various students ... all of them they have to achieve the KKM ... how can I meet their needs?” (Interview, Lestari, School One). Dominated by its academic-achievement orientation, the education system appeared to be markedly limiting the teachers’ ability to respond effectively to their students’ different learning needs.

In the next section I discuss my findings relating participation and collaboration.

6.4. Being denied access to group contributions

For the students labelled as learning disabled, a number of teaching practices that minimised their opportunities to engage in meaningful, rich and collaborative learning experiences alongside other students in their classes. I noticed time and again during my observations, the teachers controlling how students should work on their tasks. Most of the time, the teachers favoured having students work individually, on their own. However, there were some situations where three out of the four participating teachers decided their students could work in groups. The teachers’ decisions to group

their students appeared to be unplanned, but when they did set up groups, these usually consisted of four to six students and some included students labelled as learning disabled with peers. The teachers were nearly always the ones who determined which students should work with one another (see Chapter Five).

The account below describes a time when Putri's teacher placed her in a group consisting of three other students, two of whom were peers who participated in my study (Students 3 and 9):

The teacher asks the students to do the task in groups. Putri is grouped with Student 3, Student 9, and Student 10. Putri is assigned to write the answers. During discussion, Student 3 and Student 9 often discuss the task between themselves ... Putri is looking at them as they talk ... Putri does not talk, but keeps looking at Student 3 and Student 9, who are still talking to each other. When Student 3 and Student 9 agree about what to write, Student 9 says to Putri, "Write this!" Student 9 dictates to Putri ... Putri writes it down. (Field note, School Two)

Although the teacher in this account initiated the activities, she expected the students to work together to solve them. Student 3 and Student 9 talked to each other to discuss and decide what they wanted to write and did not include Putri and Student 10. Putri just looked at them while they were discussing their ideas and did not try to offer her ideas. Putri seemed invisible to the other students and so was not involved in the group discussion, lessening her opportunity to participate in the task. Student 3 and Student 9

actively worked together to solve the task. It was not clear why they did not involve Putri or why Putri did not participate during discussion. In the end, Student 3 and Student 9 did the group task, and Putri and Student 10 copied down what Students 3 and 9 had decided in their exercise books. I surmised that Student 3 and Student 9 might share similar academic qualities. During my observations outside the class activities, I saw that they were relatively close to each other and had little interaction with Putri and Student 10. Their collegiality might be another reason why Student 3 and Student 9 collaborated to solve the task when they were grouped together rather than to work with Putri and Student 10.

My observation data also confirmed that collaboration between the students labelled as learning disabled and the peers was infrequent whenever they were grouped together. The peers preferred to discuss the group task within their own social grouping, rather than involve students labelled as learning disabled. The peers also seemed to have a dominant role in group discussion and made little if any effort to seek or encourage the involvement of students labelled as learning disabled in discussions. As a result, the students labelled as learning disabled never had opportunity to make meaningful contributions when in these groups. Other studies also show that students labelled as learning disabled have low levels of engagement when they are included in group activities (see, for example, Baxter, Woodward, &

Olson, 2001; Bottge, Heinrichs, Mehta, & Hung, 2002; Lambert & Sugita, 2016; Wendelborg & Tøssebro, 2011). The study by Baxter et al. (2001), for example, showed that the participation level of the 16 target students (identified as either low-achieving or in need of special education intervention in maths) was consistently low.

Mixed-ability groupings potentially offer a wide range of opportunities for all students to gain knowledge and learn skills from and with one another. They also provide opportunities for students to encourage one another's participation in learning. However, analysis of my data indicated that the participating students labelled as learning disabled gained little benefit from being in mixed-ability groups. Instead, these groupings appeared to increase the achievement and interactions of the peers, rather than support the students labelled as learning disabled to progress. The peers tended to exercise their authority by directing the way learning in the group would be organised, including what and how each group member would contribute. In general, the students labelled as learning disabled seemed to become alienated within the groups. They were not given opportunity to share their knowledge or skills. Consequently, these groupings appeared to exacerbate these students' barriers to participation and learning.

The data from my study showed a contrast not only in how the non-learning students with disabilities interacted with one another in group situations but also in how the students labelled as learning disabled and students with low achievement interacted with their peers in group situations. When, with respect to interactions between peers and students labelled as learning disabled, Nining's teacher, Lestari, assigned her to work with Student 7 because Nining was having difficulty with multiplication, Student 7 asked Nining three times, "How much is seven times eight?" He pointed at the number he wanted Nining to give without offering to explain to her how to do the calculation to achieve that answer. Nining showed a passive-resistant response to Student 7's instruction. In the end, Student 7 told Lestari that because Nining would not respond to his question, he had stopped trying to help her (Field note, School One). Student 7's image of Nining was doubtless based on the fact that she was often described by her teacher and her peers as having learning problems. Student 7's view influenced how he responded to and interacted with Nining's difficulties.

During my observations in School One, the students labelled as learning disabled did not interact with peers during most activities, and on the rare times the students labelled as learning disabled did try to collaborate, they were not successful. It is likely that the infrequent interactions between students labelled as learning disabled and peers enhanced this failure to

collaborate because the two groups did not have opportunity to negotiate their presumptions, expectations, and beliefs about each other. Instead, the peers' view of students labelled as learning disabled was continuously co-constructed through day-to-day interactions in the classroom. Certainly, teachers rarely endeavoured to facilitate collaborations between students labelled as learning disabled and peers in their practices because their focus remained firmly on delivery of teaching content. The teachers' lack of emphasis on encouraging interactions amongst students thus presented another barrier to participation for the students labelled as learning disabled while simultaneously reinforcing teaching practices that contribute to student exclusion (César & Santos, 2006).

Interestingly, though, Nining and Santi, both labelled as learning disabled by their teacher, were able to work collaboratively. They tended to have intense, active interactions, involving open dialogue that led to engagement between them, as evident in this excerpt from my field notes:

Santi came to Nining's desk ... looks at Nining's work.

Santi: Huh, you can't count it. It's not right. This is how you do it!

Nining: I don't know! Teach me slowly!

Santi: Watch me ... [writing] 'Do you get it?'

Nining: How do you get this result?

Santi repeats his explanation to Nining. Nining listens to Santi's explanation and sometimes asks Santi when she does

not understand how Santi gets the result. Discussion seems to happen naturally between them. (Field note, School One)

Santi seemed eager to help Nining. She supported Nining by showing her how to proceed with the task. Nining actively engaged in discussion with Santi, apparently because Nining was able to meet her need to understand Santi's explanation. Their interaction, involving discussion and listening, signalled positive invitations to express their ideas to each other.

Putri and Wawan likewise support each other when they were in Grade 4. When doing tasks together, they usually discussed it, especially if they had difficulties doing it or different opinions about it. They continued this collaboration when they moved into Grade 5, showing their willingness to support each other and to continue doing so. For example, when the teacher asked Putri was to write the answer to a task on the whiteboard, Wawan shouted out to Putri which numbers he should multiply, "How much is three times seven, Putri?" he called, while pointing to those numbers (Field note, School Two). Wawan repeated the calculation to Putri, and Putri followed Wawan's suggestion.

In general, the students labelled as learning disabled were able to collaborate well with other students labelled as learning disabled. Supporting one another in this way seemed to promote their learning and participation. However, the poor interactions between learning-disabled and peers had the

potential to undermine opportunity to build connection and collaboration. The significance of this finding is that unless collaboration among students is reinforced in some way, students' interactions with one another and their overall participation will decrease (Rossetti, 2012), thus lessening the likelihood of inclusive learning environment developing in classrooms (Black-Hawkins, 2010; César & Santos, 2006).

6.5. Recognition and acceptance

Recognition and acceptance relate to the third element of *The Framework for Participation* (Black-Hawkins, 2010) – participation and diversity. This element refers to classroom practices that fail to acknowledge and welcome each classroom member's individuality. During my study, I explored participation and diversity in terms of peers' recognition of students labelled as learning disabled as part of their classroom and as learning community members deserving of respect and accepted for their difference. I focused on the extent to which the relationships among the students reflected recognition and acceptance of students by students (Black-Hawkins, 2010) and the extent to which that reflection emphasised inclusion or exclusion.

The students used levels of academic ability to communicate their perceptions of one another's position (ranking) in the class hierarchy. They identified one another in accordance with whether they met the criteria of

“smart” or “not smart.” Students labelled as learning disabled seemed to be aware of their position. During my conversation with some peers from School One, they used the term “top” to refer to high academic quality. They understood that an individual’s academic achievement and ability were the factors determining their categorisation:

- Student 6: Y is the top in the class.
Student 7: Yeah, I think Y is the top among the others.
Student 8: I think X is the top student.
Costrie: Why do you think so?
Student 6: Because Y is good at speech... and she is smart.”
Student 7 Y is smart.”
Student 8: I think X is smart, and she gains the first rank in the class.

(Fieldnote, School One)

The students seemed to have a similar understanding among themselves about who among their peers received different credit and why. They evaluated their peers’ position using ability and academic achievement, and equated high level of ability with high academic achievement.

Being smart was linked to a high position in the ability hierarchy and to popularity. Students perceived as “unpopular” were likely to be those with deficits in academic-related areas. For example, during my informal talk with Putri, a student labelled as learning disabled, and Student 4, her peer, we

began discussing some students who were positioned as “popular” in their class. The word the students used does not directly translate to the English word popular, but rather was an expression which had implicit within it the idea of high academic achievement equating with status and likeability. I have, however, used the word popular in the English translation of what the students said.

- Putri: Erka is the most popular in the class because she is smart.
- Student 4: Yes, she is.
- Costrie: So, being popular means smart, huh?
- Putri: Yeah, I guess so.
- Costrie: Then who is the unpopular one?
- Putri: Wawan!
- Student 4: Wawan!
- Costrie: Why is Wawan unpopular?
- Student 4: He’s not smart. (Field, School Two)

The students obviously measured student popularity according to whether students could or could not demonstrate their academic skills adequately during class activities. For example, Santi and Nining’s peers evaluated them on the basis of their inability to demonstrate certain basic academic skills, leaving them at risk of being excluded from or isolated within a classroom culture and system that seemed to give high value to ability and academic achievement.

Costrie: And who is the unpopular in your class?
Student 8: Santi and Nining.
Student 6: Yup, Santi and Nining...
Student 7: Because they can't read and write.
Costrie: So, Santi and Nining are not popular because they can't read and write?
(Student 6 and Student 8 nod their heads.)
Student 8: And they're not smart.
Students 6 and 7: Yeah, you're right. They're not smart.
(Field note, School One)

Being smart also appeared to be a preferred quality governing the development of friendships among the students. For example, during my talk with Student 8 about his peers, he mentioned that "I only make friends with smart students" (Interview, Student 8, School One). This finding resonates with findings from other studies (see, for example, Estell et al., 2008; Farmer et al., 2011) highlighting the low position of students labelled as learning disabled in classroom social hierarchies. This categorisation practice, which was created and maintained by the students in the two participating school, could reflect the social categorisation in school context, in which people deemed smart are seen more favourably than people not seen as smart (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2005) According Farmer et al (2018), students labelled as learning disabled had lesser popularity than peers on the basis of individual

ability presents a barrier to participation conducive to building and developing relationships.

Students appeared to determine their membership in friendship (social) pairings and groups in the classroom on the basis of their closeness to whomever they most frequently spent time with, inside and outside the classroom. During my observations in both participating schools, I saw that interactions between students labelled as learning disabled and other students were limited. In School One, Santi and Nining barely interacted with their peers and rarely talked to them. It was common for the two students labelled as learning disabled and the peers not to interact with one another, either during learning or break times. Because the students labelled as learning disabled were not close to their non-disabled-learning peers, it was difficult for them to develop a sense of membership. In School Two, Putri and Wawan were somewhat more able than Santi and Nining in School One to interact with their peers, although in some situations they also experienced exclusion from their peers. For example, their peers refused to include them in group work.

In School One, Santi's and Nining's difficulties in gaining friendship-based membership, which included them not being acknowledged by the members of their learning groups during learning activities, had contributed

to them being passive and withdrawn. Peers tended to express their resentment when the teacher nominated Santi and Nining to be part of their group because they did not want them in the group. This lack of acceptance in learning groups suggested that the students labelled as learning disabled were unlikely to be accepted as part of the wider classroom group.

An exclusive relationship with each other seemed to be the only option remaining to Santi and Nining, which Santi confirmed when I interviewed her: “I often talk with Nining.” Lestari, the two students’ teacher, supported the girls’ relationship and told me that they did not interact with their peers either inside or outside the classroom. When I asked Lestari why Santi and Nining did not join their peers, she replied that the other students in her class had their own groups: “Nining and Santi ... [are] not part of any groups ... Santi only plays with Nining, and vice versa” (Interview, Lestari, School One). Lestari added that, during breaks, Santi and Nining usually watched their peers playing outside without showing any interest in joining them: “[They] isolate themselves and never play with their peers” (Interview, Lestari, School One). My own observations supported what Lestari told me:

Santi and Nining don't talk to their seatmates, let alone the remaining students. They look at the other students’ activities from a distance without involving themselves in what their friends are playing. (Field note, School One)

Santi's and Nining's lack of interactions with other students suggested they had positioned themselves and had also been positioned by their peers as "outsiders". According to Lestari, Santi and Nining tended to behave differently when they were together from how they behaved when they were with the peers in their class. Lestari said the two girls were "talkative" when they were together and "too shy" when they were with peers. Lestari seemed to understand that other students did not like Santi and Nining, and she attributed this to the girls' not having the same ability level as their peers:

"Well... when [Santi and Nining] are together, they are talkative, talking to each other all the time. But when they are together with the other students, they are too shy [raised tone], just silent. It's probably because the other students don't like [Santi and Nining] ... It is common to have smart students with the other smart students, so they will avoid [pause] avoid [Santi and Nining]." (Interview, Lestari, School One)

Lestari's apparent acceptance of students labelled as learning disabled and peers not getting along together tacitly supported divisions between the two groups of students. This finding resonates with a study by Rossetti (2012). She examined friendships between high school students with and without autism and found that teachers could either support or inhibit interactions between these two groups of students.

Lestari appeared to highlight students' ability-based qualities as a distinct factor in the formation of social groups among students. The word "smart" was a descriptor not only for social grouping but also a qualifier of ability during learning. Students who did not meet the smart criterion therefore fell into the "not smart" category. Lestari's comments pointed to her apparent belief that students should associate with students who had the "same" attributes and could therefore be regarded as "compatible". Students identified as smart communicated certain qualities that not-smart students did not have. Lestari also seemed to accept the other students' use of terms such as "not smart" and "stupid" when describing Santi and Nining.

When I asked peers about the criteria they used when accepting class members into their social groups, they emphasised being smart as an important criterion. As Student 6, Santi's and Nining's peer, said, "I just want to interact with smart students" (Interview, Student 6, School One). When I asked him to mention students in the classroom he did not want in his group, he answered with a half-shout, "Santi and Nining!" When I asked him why, he answered, "Because they are stupid!" (Interview, Student 6, School One). A similar response came from Student 8, the other peer. She said she refused to have Santi and Nining in her group because (said with emphasis), "[T]hey can't read and ... [they're] not smart" (Interview, Student 8, School One). During my observations, I often heard peers in the classroom using negative

and pejorative terms, such as “stupid”, when they referred to Santi and Nining. That they did so seemed inevitable given the extent to which teachers and students emphasised ability as a marker of social status and a main reason for inclusion in or exclusion from student groupings.

On another occasion, I saw several peers resisting Lestari’s decision to have Santi and Nining join their group’s activities. The peers overtly refused to let Santi and Nining be part of their group. They told Lestari that Santi and Nining would adversely influence the group’s performance.

“But they are so ... so ... so ... slow, Mrs. They can ruin our group!” (Field note, School One)

The peers saw Santi and Nining as a threat. Santi and Nining, however, seemed to understand why their peers rejected them. During a joint interview with Santi and Nining, they said their teacher “often moved” them from one group to another if their peers protested. They did this because “[we] cannot perform well as other students” (Interviews, Santi and Nining, School One). Both girls not only understood but also seemed to accept the teacher’s decision to remove them in response to peers’ protests. At the time of this interview, Santi said that Nining had been removed three times from the groups she had been placed with, while Santi had been removed twice. Identified as “different”, the two students labelled as learning disabled had to

cope with rejection from their peers, which was reinforced by the teacher acceding to the peers' demands.

This finding once more supports studies showing that students labelled as learning disabled tend to be subjected to exclusion by their peers in regular school settings (see, for example, Pijl, Frostad, & Flem, 2008; Pijl, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2010). When membership status is based on ability level, students perceived as lacking in ability such as Santi and Nining become excluded from both the social and the learning groups in their class and are very unlikely to be nominated by their peers for participation in any sort of collaborative engagement inside and outside the classroom. This type of exclusionary classroom culture greatly limits the practice of inclusive pedagogy that acknowledges and welcomes student diversity (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), while students' inability to recognise and accept diversity amongst themselves favours the development of barriers to interaction (Black-Hawkins, 2002).

6.6. Chapter summary

I used the structure of the *Framework for Participation* (Black-Hawkins, 2002, 2010) as a means of exploring the findings presented in this chapter. That exploration allowed descriptions of and explanations about the struggle to participate in learning that the students labelled as learning disabled who

featured in this study were experiencing. Compared to their peers, these students experienced limited participation to learning, whether working on their own or in groups with other students in the classrooms. In addition, their presence in the classroom did not prompt their teachers to modify or adapt the curriculum to ensure their access to the curriculum.

The teachers from the study schools did try to help the students labelled as learning disabled participate in learning, such as asking them to answer questions. These attempts suggest that the teachers had some positive practices at hand to promote the academic achievement of students labelled as learning disabled. However, these students' access to the curriculum was limited to working on tasks of relatively low difficulty. The teachers also seemed to have fewer interactions with the students labelled as learning disabled than with the peers during learning activities. The students labelled as learning disabled tended to avoid asking teachers and peers for help with learning activities. At the same time, peers were unlikely to offer support and help to students labelled as learning disabled.

In terms of participation and collaboration, teachers facilitated learning activities that involved interactions between students labelled as learning disabled and their peers, such as group tasks. Teachers determined the membership of these groups, some of which included students labelled as

learning disabled and peers. However, the presence of students labelled as learning disabled in a group did not encourage collaboration because the peers tended to interact with students who had similar characteristics and levels of ability to them. The peers also tended to maintain the ability-based social divisions in the classroom and therefore typically excluded students labelled as learning disabled, whom they considered to be “different”. This response reinforced barriers for participation and learning for the students labelled as learning disabled, not only academically but also socially.

Friendships among the students were based on the students’ perceptions of who most resembled them in terms of ability. Despite their efforts to facilitate relationships among the students by reinforcing group work, the teachers seemed to accept the “sameness” practice toward inclusion practised by their students, and overall failed to encourage their students to build a classroom culture that upheld practices focused on respecting, positively acknowledging, and supporting difference.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1. Introduction

This discussion chapter centres on the three key themes that emerged from my data and on social constructionism, which provided a theoretical framework for this study. This chapter also aims to answer the main research questions related to experiences of students labelled as learning disabled, ways in which these students are labelled in everyday classroom situations, and challenges these students encountered in classrooms. I begin with a summary of the key findings and presentation of my main argument with respect to those findings, which is that learning disabilities are socially constructed. The implications of my research for teaching and learning of students labelled as learning disabled and inclusive education round out the chapter.

7.2. Discourse of ability

In this study, the students whom teachers identified as learning disabled were those whose achievement of “age and stage” curriculum standards was particularly low. This identification did not seem to acknowledge that the achievement profiles of students labelled as learning disabled can vary. The teachers’ constructions of learning disabilities therefore focused primarily on the students’ inability rather than their ability (see Chapter One). The

teachers also appeared to hold the belief that a student's level of ability influences his or her achievement level.

Smith and Barr (2008) call our attention to ability bias. This type of bias refers to a narrow view of learning in which students seen as incapable of demonstrating taught knowledge and skills are assumed to have learning disabilities. My findings indicate that the teachers who participated in my study constructed learning disability as an ability-related problem. For these teachers, students whose academic achievement was inadequate were of low ability level. Because this view of learning disabilities is bounded in terms of student deficiency, it supports a dominant discourse of ability wherein lack of ability is the main factor contributing to learning problems. It is the assumed lack of academic ability that positions students labelled as learning disabled as such. It also represents them through a deficit discourse that labels them as incapable, incompetent, slow, and at risk of being held back (see Chapter One). The findings of my study showed that labelling had a detrimental effect for students labelled as learning disabled, especially on how this influenced their identities as learners. Once they were labelled, how did they get rid of it? The label becomes a marker that defines who they are. My study showed that the importance of teachers being mindful of the term they used to describe their students, which potentially undermined or limited some students from achieving and participating in learning. Labelling students as

learning disabled might result in viewing a disability as a negative identity that hampering them from gaining rich and meaningful learning experiences.

In my study, the meaning attached to learning disabilities could not be separated from a discourse of ability communicated through interactions among various people – teachers, students, and me (the researcher) – as well as from the education policies and systems played out in the day-to-day classroom practices of the two participating schools. As outlined in Chapter One, the emphasis inherent in the learning goals set down in Indonesian education documents is for students to achieve mastery of sets of prescribed competencies or KKM criteria (see Chapter One).

These competencies are stated in Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum, and they make clear that teachers are responsible for ensuring all students meet them. The 2013 Curriculum has therefore shaped not only what pedagogical practices necessitate and what students learn but also how they should learn. Consequently, the way teachers in Indonesia identify students as learning disabled cannot be disconnected from how they organise their classroom activities and access to resources. When the focus of learning aims to mainly promote only academic achievement, the means whereby teachers orchestrate their teaching will undoubtedly emphasise classroom activities that allow teachers to measure students' academic achievement against the KKM

criteria. These criteria have become the legitimised way in the Indonesian education system of not only evaluating students' competence but also determining who measures that competence and how. When justifying why they identified certain of their students as learning disabled, the teachers in my study said these students were students who did not meet the KKM criteria. The teachers were therefore using the KKM criteria to position students and their achievement on the basis of their abilities.

The assumption that ability can be measured legitimises a hierarchical classification among students in Indonesia: those students who pass the standards established by the KKM criteria are considered to be high-achieving learners; those who do not achieve the standards are viewed as low-achieving students. This categorisation was readily understood by the students in my study because their teachers and their classmates continuously and frequently communicated the importance of gaining good marks. The "good mark" had thus become a salient characteristic by which teachers determined students' ability.

Dudley-Marling (2004) argues that sociocultural contexts influence how teachers notify, recognise, decide, and identify students as learning disabled. Teachers' understandings about students' abilities help to legitimate classroom practices that sustain students' identities as learners. Consequently,

when the focus of teaching and learning lies within the determinist belief of “fixed ability”, students are ranked according to the normal distribution, a practice which shapes who or what they then become (Florian, 2008; Skidmore, 2002, 2004). The practices of identification, assessment, evaluation, and treatment of students labelled as learning disabled become embedded within the classroom routines through which teachers communicate messages of competence to students (see Chapter Four and Five). Teachers therefore play a significant role as knowledgeable agents whose opinions about their students’ performance and identities are absorbed by students.

This dominant view of ability in the education system was clearly evident in classroom practices set by the teachers who participated in my study. These practices included remedial education and ability grouping (see Chapter Five). Some of the teachers used remedial education to support their students labelled as learning disabled. However, it seemed that this practice could not be separated from the teachers’ belief that the aim of remediation is to “fix” the basic academic areas in which students labelled as learning disabled experience difficulties (Chen & Yu, 2016; Skidmore, 2002). The “fix” for the teachers was to give their students labelled as learning disabled more exercises so as to provide them with the basic knowledge and skills they were lacking. The teachers believed that remediation would give

students labelled as learning disabled better access to and achievement in learning, as outlined in the 2013 Curriculum (Skidmore, 2002). The Indonesian Government takes the same view of remediation, as its Ministry of Education requires remediation to be applied when students cannot meet the KKM criteria. The assumption regarding remediation for students labelled as learning disabled seems to be that exposing these students to more learning materials will enable them to meet the standards. Remediation therefore focuses on students' internal condition (their lack of ability) as the cause of their learning problems.

Some of the teachers in my study constructed remedial education as the "right" way to address students labelled as learning disabled's difficulties because it meant they could control and monitor the students' learning to meet a standard of normality (Burr, 2015). As indicated earlier, Sulistyani (2014) and Skidmore (2002, 2004) challenge the belief that remedial education helps students labelled as learning disabled attain a certain minimum competence level. This belief implies that teachers respond to students labelled as learning disabled' difficulties from a deficit model that requires these students to adjust to the curriculum rather than have teachers arrange and modify the curriculum to meet the students' needs. Students labelled as learning disabled are therefore more likely than other students to experience narrowed curriculum content (Skidmore, 2004) and to receive

simpler, repeated, intensive instruction in basic skills, an approach that can potentially devalue these students and create learning inequality for them (MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016).

Ability grouping also corresponded with the participating teachers' belief that the knowledge imparted to students labelled as learning disabled should be of a lower level of knowledge and skills than that given to students not identified as learning-disabled. Teachers also thought that students labelled as learning disabled were more likely to rely on them for help than to try and exercise their ability. Although teachers were convinced that ability grouping could help students labelled as learning disabled enhance their achievement, they also appeared to think that students labelled as learning disabled would show only minimal progress in learning.

Remediation and ability grouping as practised by the participating teachers showed that the way they treated their students labelled as learning disabled aligned with their understandings about learning disabilities and students labelled as learning disabled (see Chapter Five). The issue here is that when teachers see classroom practices such as those just mentioned as accepted ways of teaching students labelled as learning disabled but not other students, they place the students labelled as learning disabled in disadvantaged positions that potentially lead to discrimination and exclusion.

As I explained in Chapter Five, the participating teachers in my study provided more opportunities for peers than for students labelled as learning disabled to exercise their knowledge and skills. This discriminatory practice left the students labelled as learning disabled at risk of being segregated and prevented from having rich, meaningful learning experiences. Although the students labelled as learning disabled in the two study schools had to meet the competencies prescribed in the 2013 Curriculum, their teachers expected that they would be unlikely to do this because they saw these students as eligible for only low-level cognitive tasks.

The teachers' beliefs about students labelled as learning disabled and the pressure on them to have their students meet curriculum standards appeared to be limiting their ability to support the students labelled as learning disabled, let alone respond to student diversity in general. The only recourse these teachers seemed to have was to teach their students to meet the standards, leaving them little room to accommodate students' individual needs. In related vein, because the KKM criteria require all students to meet the same competencies, the teachers did not have the flexibility to modify the curriculum according to their students' needs.

These constraints on the teachers' ability to use pedagogical practices aimed at effectively meeting students' different learning needs made it

difficult for them to be inclusive in their teaching practice. Challenging teachers to teach diverse learners in terms of ability is understandable, but if their focus, because of curriculum requirements, is channelled only towards students labelled as learning disabled, then inclusive education is inhibited. Teachers need to be equipped with strategies to support all students' learning rather than focus on one group of students only. Further discussion on the challenges facing the teachers in this study can be found later in this chapter.

My findings also revealed that the teachers' beliefs and attitudes about students labelled as learning disabled influenced how other students in the classrooms viewed those students (see Chapters Four and Six). In classrooms where the culture emphasised individual achievement, teachers and students alike viewed the presence of students labelled as learning disabled as hindering other students' academic achievement. The teachers in my study often described the students labelled as learning disabled as slow to learn. They told me that they always needed more time to explain a topic when they had students labelled as learning disabled in their classes. All of the teachers also saw difficulties of the students labelled as learning disabled as an intrinsic characteristic of them as people. Blaming the individual student for difficulty in learning is a deficit view of learners and learning.

Not only the teachers' expressed views of and actions toward students labelled as learning disabled but also classroom context provided the peers with information enabling them to recognise and make students labelled as learning disabled' difficulties visible. The peers' construction of learning difficulties was reinforced through student interactions in the classroom. The peers in my study perceived the students labelled as learning disabled as slow and hard to understand. They readily identified the students labelled as learning disabled as the students needing a long time to finish learning tasks and not being able to respond adequately to teachers' questions and instructions. The peers also recognised the students labelled as learning disabled from their grades, and all of them said that the students labelled as learning disabled would be unlikely to get high grades. The judgement the students labelled as learning disabled made of their ability signified the difference between the two groups of students.

The daily interactions between teachers and students reinforced the views of learning disabilities. Instead of challenging these views, the students labelled as learning disabled in my study accepted their teachers' and peers' views about themselves as learners. The detrimental effect negative constructions of ability attached to students labelled as learning disabled were having on these students' learning and achievement is an obvious concern. Although the students labelled as learning disabled in my study tried to

participate in learning, these students understood that it was ability that counted. Experiencing learning challenges also saw them limiting their participation in learning or “acting out”. Three of the four students labelled as learning disabled tended to avoid situations where they might make a mistake and would be shamed by their learning problems being on display to their teachers and non-learning-disabled peers. As one of these three students said, revealing their weaknesses in learning was “embarrassing” (see Chapter Five). Support for this finding comes from a study by Fletcher et al. (2009), who found that minority students did not want to risk making their lack of knowledge and skills known to their peers. The students labelled as learning disabled in my study viewed making mistakes as a negative experience. The fourth student exhibited behaviour interpreted by teachers and peers as disruptive (see further commentary on this matter below) or of no consequence to the learning tasks at hand. Vulnerable and at-risk of experiencing educational failure, all four students can be positioned as victims of a teaching and learning environment unresponsive to their particular needs.

Seale, Nind, and Simmons (2013) argue that aspects of school performance and educational failure embedded in educational settings influence how teachers and students view and respond to risk-taking. The three authors contend that risk-taking should be a supported part of students

labelled as learning disabled's learning. They articulate how risk-taking can benefit these students' learning, as does Ainscow (1999), who showed a strong positive association between risk-taking and inclusive education. Both Seale et al. (2013) and Ainscow (1999) assert that rather than being a negative learning experience, risk-taking is an essential means of minimising barriers to learning and to creating inclusive practices for both students and teachers. Taking a risk lets teachers explore and offer new or different teaching practices that they may have previously thought of as unthinkable to enhance students' learning and achievement.

As noted above, one learning-disabled student in my study did not appear to be affected by his teachers' and peers' evaluations of his learning. My observations showed him frequently trying to engage in learning by nominating himself to his teacher to answer her questions. When he did give correct answers, his peers assumed, out loud, that these were because he had cheated off other students' work. However, their comments still did not stop him from nominating himself each time the teacher asked students to answer questions or do tasks in front of the class (see Chapter Six). Whether this apparent confidence related to his gender or his general way of behaving in class is uncertain. Within the Indonesian context, a different sociocultural expectation is made between males and females (Hidayat, 2011). This may create disparity amongst boys and girls in terms of learning opportunity, by

attending to boys more than girls to exercise knowledge and skills. Girls' passivity may become their coping strategy to stay under the radar. However, the manner in which he worked on these tasks rarely gained the approval of his teachers or classmates. While the issue of gender bias may have been a factor in this account, my main intent in discussing it has been to show the issues of equity that can arise out of validating the achievement of some students while excluding the contributions that others, including students labelled as learning disabled, can make in the classroom.

The daily practices in the classrooms also provided information on struggle of the students labelled as learning disabled to make their contributions in learning visible and to have their voices heard. Having internalised the teachers' and peers' perceptions of them, three of them were, as just mentioned, quiet and passive and one of them was active in making his presence felt. The voices of students labelled as learning disabled should, however, be seen as positive feedback for teachers on how to improve existing classroom arrangements that can benefit all students. However, with ability and achievement emphasised as the indices of academic achievement, these students received limited acknowledgement for any contributions to learning they did make. Because of their beliefs about students labelled as learning disabled' abilities, the teachers in my study put less pressure on their students labelled as learning disabled than on their peers by giving them low-

level-ability tasks and not expecting them to master the same tasks as the other students. In so doing, they helped silence their voices (see Chapter Five).

Categorising students using a certain indicator communicates social positioning and different expectations of them. Thus, if teachers categorise a student as smart, they expect that student to show certain behaviours that accord with that category. Teachers, as was evident in my study, may give students categorised as smart more learning opportunities than they give students not categorised as such simply because they expect the smart students to achieve during these opportunities. This finding from my study also resonates with studies by Boaler et al. (2000) and Nieto and Bode (2012). They found that students' level of ability determined their opportunities to learn. This outcome is an example of the Matthew effect in which the advantaged make much greater gains academically and socially than their disadvantaged counterparts and continue so. In short, advantage accumulates advantage (Morgan, Farkas, & Hibel, 2008; Sideridis, 2011).

The teachers in my study tended to focus on supporting and encouraging peers by giving them a variety of learning experiences. They delivered content at a fast pace and expected students to work quickly as well. They also encouraged students to study independently. In contrast, they

gave the students labelled as learning disabled fewer learning opportunities and expected they would be slow to complete tasks. This categorisation of the two groups of students, based on expectation, divided the students and supported inequality among them.

An important question at this point is how this categorisation occurred in the classrooms of the two participating schools. Teachers and the wider school culture interactively develop classroom teaching and learning contexts in which teachers have opportunities to observe students' competence. But what do teachers seem to notice? In my study, the participating teachers recognised the "top" students in the class by describing their learning behaviours against the behaviours they expected of such students. Although the students labelled as learning disabled did finish learning tasks, the teachers typically considered their results as unsatisfactory because they rarely produced correct answers, a situation that demonstrated and reinforced the teachers' perceptions of these students as incompetent academically. Performing poorly was therefore part of the basis on which teachers determined which students had learning disabilities.

In essence, how students are labelled and categorised as learning disabled is not independent of classroom pedagogy and the curriculum. The curriculum guides what areas of learning students at different year levels in

schooling have to acquire and at what level of competence. Teachers use a range of assessments and other clues to identify who is labelled as learning disabled and who is not. However, as was evident from my data, the extent and variety of assessment methods were constrained by what the curriculum expected teachers to measure.

Teachers should be supported to understand what impacts can be produced from certain beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes that are manifested on their teaching practices. Teachers should be taught to be reflective about their cultural practices and develop self awareness. Teachers should continuously ask what knowledge and skills are needed to minimise their potential biases that influence their attitudes and behaviours to their students (Savage, 2009).

7.3. Discourse of failure

As has already been stressed, ability was viewed by the participating teachers as the main factor that determined a student's success or failure. As a consequence, they expected students labelled as learning disabled to fail academically. Three teachers in my study reported that students labelled as learning disabled had problems related to reading and calculating, and these problems affected these students' responses to the learning tasks. Smith and Barr (2008) suggest that when learning is constructed as what is taught, then

any difficulties that students have in demonstrating what they have been told are seen as inherent to the individual student. When problems in learning are ascribed to this deficit view, students labelled as learning disabled are perceived as incapable of learning. Skidmore (2002, 2004) similarly maintains that when students' educability is central to the notion of fixed cognitive ability, those who are labelled as learning disabled are unlikely to be recognised as learners and are therefore viewed as failing.

Teachers who hold to this deficit view are highly likely to have low expectations of students labelled as learning disabled. This likelihood was evident in my interviews with the participating teachers, who told me that they did not expect their students labelled as learning disabled to succeed because of their low ability level. Other researchers have also reported on teachers' low expectations of students labelled as learning disabled (Woodcock & Jiang, 2018; Woodcock & Vialle, 2010, 2011). For example, the study by Woodcock and Jiang (2018), conducted with 240 pre-service primary school teachers from China and Australia, found that the teachers in both countries expected their students labelled as learning disabled to fail academically. The authors suggested that, in general, the teachers saw lack of ability as one of the main causes for that failure.

When teachers assume a lack of ability as the reason for failure, the weight of expectation regarding students labelled as learning disabled' performance means there is little chance of them succeeding. Probably because they attributed failure to be the result of a factor internal to the student, the teachers in my study neither challenged this view nor seemed to recognise the school's contribution to failure among students, especially the students labelled as learning disabled. And when the students labelled as learning disabled in my study did fail, that failure in the eyes of the teachers simply became evidence supporting the set of assumptions by which they justified students as learning disabled. If the students did succeed, then that success had to be for another reason, such as cheating. As evident from my interview data, the study teachers believed that students labelled as learning disabled could not get high grades, especially in those subjects the teachers knew were a particular struggle for these students.

My findings also provided evidence that the way failure is understood is context dependent. Accordingly, failure relies on how a learning task is structured and organised, and how that task is accomplished and scrutinised by others. The teachers' constant emphasis on the need for students to produce correct answers when doing tasks left the students labelled as learning disabled convinced they were unlikely to succeed. Perceiving students labelled as learning disabled as incompetent learners, the teachers

did not expect them to achieve. The students labelled as learning disabled doubted their ability and avoided tasks they believed they could not do as they absorbed how the teachers and peers viewed them. This self-fulfilling prophecy was a strong thread in my observation and interview data.

Skidmore (2002, 2004) confirms that the way abilities of students labelled as learning disabled are shared and evaluated in classrooms underpins their responses to learning tasks. Studies by Christensen (1999) and Woodcock and Jiang (2018) also show that ongoing failure can result in students developing maladaptive beliefs about themselves and discourage them from participating in future academic tasks. Therefore, failure for students labelled as learning disabled is not an outcome of an assumed inherent inability, but resides in the social arrangement and patterns developed in education systems and reflected in that system's schools and classrooms.

The role of socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic status has long been identified as a significant factor influencing student learning. As evident in my study, teachers commonly attributed disadvantaged socioeconomic family background as another cause of learning failure among students labelled as learning disabled. However, they saw this factor, like ability, as an intrinsic fault of the student. Although

the 2016 NJCLD definition of learning disabilities emphasises that cultural and environmental factors are not associated with learning disabilities (NJCLD, 2016), the teachers in my study believed that students labelled as learning disabled's failures could not be separated from their family backgrounds. Thus, students who came from low socioeconomic families were more likely than students from more privileged backgrounds to have learning disabilities. This finding shows how social class can be manifested in school practice.

The teachers also appeared to think that children from low socioeconomic families would have little access to resources and assistance to enhance their learning at home because their parents would have limited involvement in their children's learning and schooling. The teachers therefore saw these factors as additional reasons for students exhibiting learning difficulties. One teacher, for example, assumed her students labelled as learning disabled received limited parental support because their parents had to work to meet the daily needs of their respective families.

These findings from my study indicate that teachers were referring to socioeconomic status in a way that further stigmatised the students labelled as learning disabled and differentiated them from the other students, thus legitimising the students labelled as learning disabled' status as minority and

creating social and participatory divisions among them and the other students in the class (Brantlinger, 2001). The students labelled as learning disabled in this study were therefore experiencing what Rabren, Carpenter, Dunn, and Carney (2014) call double jeopardy arising out of the challenges associated with their disability and with living in minimal circumstances.

Given that the majority of students from Schools One and Two were from low socioeconomic backgrounds, it is interesting that the teachers saw only the students labelled as learning disabled as adversely affected by home background. A possible explanation is that the teachers, having not encountered learning- students with disabilities from high socioeconomic family backgrounds, simply assumed that low socioeconomic family background increases students' susceptibility to learning disabilities (Poon, 2020; Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011). Low socioeconomic level thus becomes a label that stigmatises students labelled as learning disabled, as evident from the findings of several studies (Jordan & Levine, 2009; Shifrer et al., 2011; Thompson, McNicholl, & Menter, 2016; Wilcockson et al., 2019).

This stereotypical equating of low socioeconomic background with poor academic achievement leaves students labelled as learning disabled even more vulnerable and susceptible to negative evaluations from teachers. When

learning disabilities are stigmatised and seen as a deficit within the individual student, the assumption that links low achievement level with low socioeconomic background is likely to remain unchallenged. Similarly, ascribing student failure to a disadvantaged family background can prevent teachers from seeing how education systems and school cultures contribute to student failure, especially among students labelled as learning disabled. Skidmore (2002, 2004) challenges the idea that family background contributes to student learning of a kind that legitimates positioning students labelled as learning disabled as a lower group in the classroom hierarchy and maintaining learning and social participation gaps among students.

Identifying learning disabilities on the basis of socioeconomic status suggests that students from minority groups may also be vulnerable to the misdiagnosis of learning problems. Education systems and schools need to consider learning disabilities as related to learning circumstances rather than the product of impoverished socioeconomic environments. The latter view is deeply engrained in education systems and as a reason for students' failure history (Shifrer et al., 2011). This consideration raises the question of whether low socioeconomic status is given as a reason for students labelled as learning disabled not responding effectively to treatments teachers set up to enhance these students' learning. As long as this connection between socioeconomic background and learning disability remains, students labelled

as learning disabled are likely to experience low expectations and an increased risk of learning inequality compared to peers. When the discourse of failure is maintained through deficit assumptions and practices, and given that schools are organised around dominant norms, students labelled as learning disabled are unlikely to achieve because they do not fit those norms (Gale & Densmore, 2002). So how can students labelled as learning disabled living in socioeconomically disadvantaged families be assured of experiencing success in learning? I will return to this question later in this chapter.

7.4. Discourse of difference

For the participating students labelled as learning disabled, being recognised as such by their teachers and peers influenced how their peers interacted with them. The tendency to marginalise students labelled as learning disabled could be seen in day-to-day conversations and interactions during my visits to the two schools. The use of labels was evident from the moment I heard teachers and peers talking about the students labelled as learning disabled. This strong differentiation was a particularly common feature of talk amongst the students.

The way teachers and peers understood difference had been translated into social practices and discourses built around the construction of ability.

Classroom practices, such as ability grouping and remedial education, had emerged as a means of justifying differences among students. Instead of addressing the issue of diversity, the participating teachers saw these practices as responding to students labelled as learning disabled' problems. Ability grouping also appeared to promote segregation among the students, especially those identified as learning disabled. Learning experiences of the students labelled as learning disabled when in ability groups usually differed in terms of quality and quantity from those experienced by their classmates, and further positioned them as "different" in a negative sense. Hamilton and O'Hara (2011) point out that ability grouping is likely to hinder the development of inclusion, and thereby adversely affect students' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Boaler et al. (2000) and Ireson et al. (2001) contend that the practice of ability grouping emphasises the discourse of academic success for certain students and not others, leading to inequity and division among students in the school system (Hamilton & O'Hara, 2011) because of the different sets of learning expectations, opportunities, experiences, inherent in this practice (Boaler et al., 2000).

The tendency among the students at Schools One and Two to identify and group with students who had characteristics similar to their own demonstrated how the students labelled as learning disabled and the peers responded to and managed the difference between them. The students

labelled as learning disabled's classmates were likely to devalue them (Black-Hawkins, 2010) and not recognise them as participatory members of their classrooms (MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016). These responses were evident in my observations of the students labelled as learning disabled having limited opportunity to participate in and be recognised for their contributions to learning activities. The way teachers perceived socioeconomic disadvantage as the cause of academic failure and peers viewed students labelled as learning disabled as incapable of learning showed that classroom community could be barriers for these students to achieve (Adioetomo et al, 2014; Irwanto et al., 2010; Sunardi et al., 2014; Wibowo & Muin, 2016). Achieving membership was a challenge for the students labelled as learning disabled whenever their teachers grouped them with the non-learning-disabled peers. Wendelborg and Tøssebro (2011) and Pijl, Frostad, and Flem (2008) similarly found that the presence of students with disabilities in a classroom group did not guarantee they would be included.

Wang (2016) identified learning capacity as a factor contributing to the occurrence of participation and collaboration among peers. Not only my observation data but also the interview data provided evidence of the learning- students with disabilities finding joining in learning activities with their peers a challenge. This was especially apparent when the students labelled as learning disabled were positioned, either by their teachers, other

students, or both, at the time of an activity as less able than their peers. I also found academic ability to be a precondition for the development of friendships and memberships between the students, with the students labelled as learning disabled generally marginalised by their peers. This divide between the two groups of students once again denied the students labelled as learning disabled's opportunities to engage with their classmates and to exercise their knowledge and skills (Black-Hawkins, 2010; MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016). When student membership in a class is built on the basis of "sameness", the development of an inclusive classroom is hindered because student diversity is regarded in negative terms.

The students labelled as learning disabled in my study were aware of the hidden "rules" in the classroom that meant "smart" students received high regard and privileges. My observations consistently showed the students labelled smart being accorded more opportunities than the students labelled as learning disabled to exercise their agency through various learning materials requiring the use of advanced skills, such as problem solving. Teachers also assigned the so-called smart students with another responsibility, that of being a "tutor" for the students labelled as learning disabled. However, the students labelled as learning disabled rarely received assistance and help from these assigned students. This finding demonstrates how the students in the two schools were making sense of their positioning as

learners and of the consequences arising out of their positionings, as constructed within the classrooms.

It was through interactions in the classrooms that the students labelled as learning disabled built their understandings about their competencies and continuously negotiated and constructed their identities as learners. My participating students labelled as learning disabled certainly understood that they were different from their peers, especially in terms of their academic achievement. This discourse of difference played out among students daily through interactions that maintained distinct identities between the students labelled as learning disabled and their peers. The presence of students labelled as learning disabled viewed as minority legitimated the positions of the peers as dominant. Their privileged position in their classrooms enabled them to set and reinforce the standards through which they and their peers made judgements about one another. This process of judging others against dominant norms contributed to discrimination, segregation, and marginalisation for the students labelled as learning disabled because they did not measure up to those norms (Gale & Dinsmore, 2002). This process further hindered the possibility of them collaborating and developing friendships with other students.

The labels attached to the students labelled as learning disabled made them constantly vulnerable to the negative effects resulting from those labels. The way education systems, schools, and teachers approach student diversity can have the effect of exclusion or inclusion for students labelled as learning disabled (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Linklater, 2010). If the representation of difference receives minimum appreciation, students labelled as learning disabled will be expected to fit into the existing classroom structures and norms (Graham & Macartney, 2012), an outcome indicative of an exclusive rather than an inclusive learning environment.

7.5. Understanding teachers' challenges and pressures

The pressure my participating teachers were under to ensure their students and schools reached academic achievement standards set down in the 2013 Curriculum appeared to be at the forefront of the marginalisation of the participating students labelled as learning disabled, especially during classroom activities. The prominent issues the participating teachers brought into focus centred on barriers to learning created by the Indonesian education system and negative attitudes toward learning disabilities.

The current Indonesian education system places significant pressure on teachers to ensure their students meet the standards and competencies stated in the 2013 Curriculum. The system's emphases on standardisation,

prescribed curricula, achievement of core subjects, high-stakes control and accountability (Suratno, 2014; Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014a) are undoubtedly influenced by what society and the government consider important in learning. These emphases affect how teachers teach and evaluate students; in particular, they prevent teachers from modifying or adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, particularly students labelled as learning disabled. Their mode of teaching aligns with Smith and Barr's (2008) *learning equals being taught* model of teaching and learning (p. 408). This model views learning as knowledge transfer, and it reflects the belief that teachers are responsible for delivering knowledge.

My participating teachers all realised that their students labelled as learning disabled were at-risk of being held back because of their lack of academic achievement. They also realised that they had a responsibility to ensure that all of their students acquired the knowledge and skills prescribed in the curriculum. These understandings presented them with a dilemma because they knew their teaching strategies might not be effective in enabling the students labelled as learning disabled to reach required learning standards. For example, they were unsure as to whether they should report these students' abilities accurately and objectively, which could increase the likelihood of them being held back, or if they should increase their grades so that they met the KKM criteria. Isnawati and Saukah (2017) reported that

Indonesian teachers frequently raise grades so students reach the minimum achievement criteria. The practice of altering grades, with teachers not adhering to reporting objective and accurate grades when assessing students with disabilities, has also been confirmed in several studies worldwide (Brookhart et al., 2016; Guskey & Jung, 2009; Guskey & Link, 2019). These studies indicate that teachers in both developed and developing countries and at all education levels struggle to assign students objective grades.

In the Indonesian education system, the school accreditation process involves an evaluation against a set of criteria (see Chapter One). Setyaningsih (2017) has shown a positive correlation between accreditation status and school quality in Indonesia. Therefore, School One's accreditation rating of A could have created even more pressure for the teachers in the school to continue the school's tradition of excellence. There was evidence of this among the participating teachers in School One. They reported feeling pressured by the school policy to maintain the school's status. That pressure appeared to be influencing how they were teaching and responding to their students.

These findings demonstrate that the structural factors within an education system can affect pedagogical practices and, in turn, students' learning experiences. Structural policies and teaching practices mainly

directed toward raising academic standards can lead to tension between the pursuit of academic excellence and the promotion of inclusion. In my two participating schools, the Indonesian Government's academic standards policy was serving as an accepted tool through which students were valued and located according to a normal distribution of achievement. Therefore, the teachers' practices of remediation and mixed-ability grouping with the students labelled as learning disabled marked these students' identity as learners who were "less normal" than their peers. When students' learning difficulties are viewed primarily as a result of a deficiency considered an intrinsic part of them, this tends to shift attention away from efforts to recognise the barriers to learning and participation that may be present and practised in the classrooms.

The teachers in my study did try to help their students labelled as learning disabled because they felt responsible for them. They all expressed their concerns over how to improve these students' learning while simultaneously attending to the learning of the other students in their classes. However, they were at a loss to know what to do beyond their practices of remediation, mixed-ability groupings, and peer tutoring. The teachers admitted during my interviews with them that they actually had limited knowledge about the skills needed to effectively support students labelled as learning disabled. This admission calls attention to the need to support

teachers with sufficient knowledge and training on identifying the needs of diverse students and developing teaching strategies that respond effectively to that diversity, so that all students, including learning-disabled, can participate and achieve (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Rietveld, 2005). Training focused on increasing teachers' self-confidence and self-efficacy when teaching diverse students is also needed (Sharma & Sokal, 2016), as well as to challenge teachers to change their behaviour through developing anti-deficit thinking. It was not clear from my study whether the teachers held positive attitudes about teaching students in inclusive classrooms, but as Sharma and Sokal (2016) show, prior experience of or training in inclusive teaching can have a positive influence on teachers' attitudes, efficacy, and concerns with regard to teaching students labelled as learning disabled.

Lack of such training was evident during my observations when the teachers implemented the remediation and other practices that they expected would support the students labelled as learning disabled. Instead of adapting the materials or their teaching style to address each of these students' particular learning needs, the teachers gave them more exercises in the belief that this would help them keep up with the curriculum. When giving out these exercises, the teachers did not check whether the students understood the concepts and processes necessary to complete them or even whether the tasks were relevant to the students' needs. This aspect raises another concern,

and that is teachers' understanding of what inclusion entails. While the students labelled as learning disabled were included in the sense of them being taught together alongside other students, this was not inclusion responsive to student diversity. Such inclusion also requires attention to actively engaging students labelled as learning disabled in learning activities that enhance their participation while reducing exclusionary processes.

7.6. The implications of this study

The research findings demonstrated how the participating teachers understood learning disability. Their constructions of learning disability had similar emphases on ability and achievement, with ability seen as an intrinsic trait of the student that accounted for their lack of achievement. The impacts of these constructions of learning disability on the learning and development of students labelled as learning disabled were negative. The way the participating teachers identified students as learning-disabled also influenced how other students treated the students labelled as learning disabled. My research data provided examples of students labelled as learning disabled experiencing marginalisation from their peers. The students labelled as learning disabled were also aware of their teachers' and peers' evaluations of them, which contributed to them seeing themselves as incompetent learners. The labels the participating teachers and peers assigned to the students

labelled as learning disabled were thus articulated through projected identities that led to the students labelled as learning disabled internalising the message “not smart enough”. This process illustrated self-fulfilling prophesy in action (Francis et al., 2017).

When, as was the case in this study, teachers focus their teaching and learning on ability and attainment in accordance with narrow definitions of academic achievement set down in national curriculums, students labelled as learning disabled are likely to be viewed as incapable of learning because they cannot meet curriculum standards. The emphasis in Indonesia’s 2013 Curriculum on a merit-based achievement fails to accommodate student diversity and needs because only students who can meet the standards are viewed as eligible to learn. Students’ success and failure in learning is therefore entirely dependent on the individual student rather than on the classroom context where teaching and learning take place.

These findings have implications for curriculum development and for practices in classrooms, particularly ways of enhancing the development and implementation of inclusive education in Indonesian schooling. The curriculum needs to centre on responding to student diversity by accommodating the perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of all students, including students labelled as learning disabled who are pushed out to the

margins and limited in the opportunities they have to shape and make contributions to their own and others' learning (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Booth, 2000; Graham & Macartney, 2012).

The examples of my participants' constructions of learning disabilities and what these constructions meant for the students labelled as learning disabled bring new perspectives to the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. The findings strongly indicate that teachers need to pay more attention to supporting students labelled as learning disabled' individual learning needs and to develop positive and caring relationships with these students. In keeping with advice from Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) on inclusive pedagogy, teachers need to be supported to broaden their views about inclusive education so they understand inclusive education is not about physically placing students labelled as learning disabled alongside other students, as shown in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis, but should embrace all students, including students labelled as learning disabled, to learn. Inclusive education requires teachers to develop practices that welcome and respect each student. The Ministry of Education and Culture could play a decisive role in this regard by offering teacher training and development on learning disability so that teachers can recognise and respond to students labelled as learning disabled' needs in a way that supports them to achieve academically.

The study data provided many examples of teachers and peers representing the students labelled as learning disabled as incompetent, unable to give a correct response, passive, disengaged, unmotivated to learn, and low in academic achievement (see Chapter Four). Teachers played a critical role in creating and maintaining these ability-based assumptions. The labelling and consequent categorising of the students labelled as learning disabled as different from other students made it difficult for these students to counter the labels ascribed to them by their teachers and reinforced in their interactions with their peers. The labelling not only defined the students labelled as learning disabled through the meanings attached to those labels but justified pedagogical approaches which accorded with the belief that students labelled as learning disabled are incapable of learning (Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Boucher, & Evans, 2018).

Labelling positions students labelled as learning disabled in a distinct category that separates “us” from “them” (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 367) and so is antithetical to inclusive pedagogical practice. It carries with it information that categorises one student from another. The label thus becomes a lens through which teachers perceive and respond to students labelled as learning disabled (Graham & Macartney, 2012). Believing that students labelled as learning disabled are incapable of demonstrating certain academic skills, the teachers’ practices and interactions with students labelled

as learning disabled correspond with that belief. As a result, students may receive limited opportunities to learn, which diminishes their qualities as a learner and an individual (Graham & Macartney, 2012). These findings show the importance of being attentive to sociocultural context in understanding how students labelled as learning disabled. How the language is used to describe learning disabilities can construct how teachers think and act toward students labelled as learning disabled (Burr, 2015; Graham & Macartney, 2012). Teachers should be aware of the impact resulted of using the term “students labelled as learning disabled” in daily classroom lives. This term, not only jeopardises these students by making assertion due to their disability, but also is used to define “who” they are.

Students’ socioeconomic status is known to influence students’ learning experiences, but this knowledge for the teachers in my study legitimated their explanations that the students labelled as learning disabled’ failure resided not only in their assumed intrinsic lack of ability but also in their home environments, which were impoverished socioeconomically (see Chapters Four and Five). The teachers, in accordance with their apparent biased, stereotypical depiction of socioeconomic status, blamed the students’ home circumstances for not sufficiently supporting the students’ learning and thereby contributing to their perceived lack of ability. Their thinking was along the lines of if a student has learning disabilities, then his or her family

will be socioeconomically disadvantaged. To put this another way, if a family is socioeconomically disadvantaged, it is this type of family that will produce students labelled as learning disabled.

The findings of this study also demonstrate the critical role teachers play in creating and sustaining difference among school members. If teachers focus on seeing students' difference as deficit, it is highly likely that students labelled as learning disabled will not have opportunities to make meaningful contributions in their learning experiences. This deficit view justifies the practice of social inequality in classrooms, with that inequality continuously communicated in the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students. The practices the study teachers used, as they saw it, to enhance achievement of students labelled as learning disabled were exclusionary rather than inclusionary. Mixed-ability grouping, remedial activities, and peer teaching served only to add to the students labelled as learning disabled's feelings of alienation from their peers because these approaches reinforced the assumption that students labelled as learning disabled are less able than their peers.

Practices built on such an assumption can lead to students labelled as learning disabled being either passively engaged in their learning or acting out, behaviours which create a barrier to learning and participation. In

contrast, assumptions based on ability can see peers being given opportunity to gain more access to knowledge. The assumption that only some students have potential to learn, and therefore to succeed, seemed to maintain a status quo that was deeply ingrained in the participating teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices. The implication of this situation is that peers will continue to be more privileged than students labelled as learning disabled in terms of learning and achieving. If these beliefs and associated practices, emanating from a narrow view of ability and achievement in the national curriculum, continue to exist in classrooms in Indonesia, then inclusive education is unlikely to be realised.

7.7. Chapter summary

I began this chapter with a summative exploration of the perspectives that the study teachers and students, respectively, had of learning disabilities and students labelled as learning disabled. As explained, my study highlighted teachers' roles in constructing and negotiating learning disabilities. These epistemological beliefs influenced teachers' teaching instructions, which typically did not align with inclusive pedagogical practice.

My study also confirmed the value of considering students' voices by capturing their views and perspectives, so as to provide richer understandings about their schooling experiences and the barriers to learning and

participation they might experience and struggle with. The marginalisation and exclusion experienced by the students labelled as learning disabled in my study suggests an urgent need for change directed toward encouraging inclusive practices in everyday Indonesian school life.

The next and final chapter is the conclusion. Here, I highlight the key findings pertaining to my research questions. I also give a brief account of the study's limitations and offer directions for future research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Future Directions

8.1. Summary of main findings

This thesis has explored common conceptions of learning disability socially constructed within the Indonesian educational context. In this final chapter, I present three key conclusions from my research.

The first is that the discourse of ability dominated pedagogical practices and opportunities in the two schools that participated in the study. Ability had been accepted as the norm by which teachers identified a student as learning disabled, and it was a key indicator by which students' academic achievement was evaluated and categorised. Each student's ability was measured against whether his or her academic achievement met with the mastery minimum standards (the KKM) in Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum. The teachers identified a student as learning disabled if his or her grades were below the KKM minimum standards. The view that ability could be measured highlighted the deficit view that ability is innate and fixed within the individual student (Skidmore, 2002, 2004), and it positioned students identified as learning disabled as defective or abnormal.

Views of ability that were perceived as inherently individual contributed to practices that potentially marginalised some students over the

other students. Consequently, these students were subject to particular pedagogical practices by their teachers that were believed to normalise their condition (Skidmore, 2002, 2004). The teachers ascribed failure in learning of students labelled as learning disabled as problem intrinsic to the student and fixed; little could therefore be done to address it. Not only ability level but also socioeconomic disadvantaged home backgrounds were used by teachers to legitimate the causes of students labelled as learning disabled' failures. This emphasis on failure as the result of individual student factors demonstrated that the teachers constructed failure within a deficit belief of academic achievement (Skidmore, 2002, 2004).

The teachers' belief that only some students could achieve and contribute to learning was a particularly strong theme in my findings. The teachers' perceptions of students labelled as learning disabled' persistent failure history impacted those students' access to advanced knowledge and skills. Students labelled as learning disabled developed a low academic self-concept as a result of teachers and peers continually communicating that failure in daily classroom life. They avoided situations where others might easily recognise their mistakes, and viewed making a mistake as a negative learning experience because, as they said, it meant being regarded as incompetent by their teachers and peers.

The second conclusion from this study is that the teachers were caught up in a system that was guided by a strict curriculum. With the curriculum emphasising values such as academic achievement and competitiveness, the teachers accepted these values as informing their practices and then orchestrating them to align with the system. It was difficult for the teachers to teach in different ways because the system guided what and how learning was, and it was the pedagogical practices derived from that system that had the potential to influence, for better or worse, students' learning and identity as learners.

Situated within a system that highly values individual academic achievement, the students who could not perform well were seen as unfit, increasing the likelihood that they would be labelled as learning disabled. Once students were labelled as such, they were locked within the system, identified on a long-term basis with little chance of shaking off this negative label. The label justified the students labelled as learning disabled's learning to receive deficit-based treatments from their teachers and peers (Snow, n.d). The label had become an attribute that defined who these students were.

It seems that when ability is used to determine what and how students learned, inequality and exclusion can become embedded within classroom practices as teachers demonstrate and apply different expectations of their

students. And once teachers' attitudes and values become embedded within the deterministic beliefs underpinning their understandings about their students' abilities, inclusive education is unlikely to happen. Therefore, because of the potential long-term detrimental effect that labelling can have on students, especially for those who do not keep up well in school, another way of understanding needs to be brought into the system, one that takes the focus off the students and instead addresses the *context* of learning as a way to understand students' learning.

My third and last conclusion from my study findings is that being different was not an accepted norm in the classrooms of the two participating schools. This lack of acceptance adversely influenced the students labelled as learning disabled' learning experiences and opportunities to participate and make meaningful contributions in their classrooms. Their teachers used a one-size-fits-all strategy when teaching and failed to consider the notion of difference wherein each student is unique in how they learn. Again, when a deterministic view dominates teaching practices, ability is viewed as fixed and inherent within the student, and some students are viewed as more deserving than others of additional and enhanced learning opportunities.

Being recognised as different also influenced what learning opportunities and experiences the learning students did achieve, albeit rarely,

and how. If similarity is emphasised and difference is minimised and not supported in schools, the presence of students labelled as learning disabled is likely to be viewed as a threat to other students' learning and to teachers' practices. There was limited room in the classroom society of the two schools to address difference as positive and expected; instead it was being addressed as minimal and controlled. This approach contradicts the notion of inclusive education, which welcomes student diversity and recognises that each student's uniqueness can advantage all students.

How schools and classrooms are organised cannot be separated from how the wider society shapes understandings of achievement and inclusion, as manifested in the education system. When society emphasises values based on academic achievement of individual students and schools, teacher responses to a wide range of differences in the classrooms will be based on ability and socioeconomic class. Tensions can emerge as a result of conflicts between principles that, on the one hand, highlight individual academic standards and, on the other, accommodate the diversity of students despite their backgrounds. Responding effectively to student diversity may require a shift in how inclusive education is conceptualised – a shift that extends well beyond simply placing students with disabilities in regular schools. The reconceptualisation of inclusive education should involve significant changes in strategies that focus on inclusive pedagogy so that all students, not just

some or the majority of them, can learn and achieve (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

8.2. Implications of this research

The findings of the current study suggest several implications related to teacher education and student voice.

8.2.1. Teacher education

Although the principle of diversity is reflected in the Indonesian expression *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, the way difference is understood and addressed in Indonesia, particularly within educational contexts, needs to be critically addressed. Dealing with student diversity in terms of disability/ability and socioeconomic status presents challenges for teachers and school leaders if the constructions of difference tend to be negative. Such a stance is something to be avoided and minimised rather than respected and celebrated. As shown in the study findings, being different was viewed as a problem, and students who fell into certain categories of difference were likely to be grouped, marginalised, and stigmatised by the dominant culture that represented sameness and assumed that difference should be “managed”.

The findings of this study suggest that labelling and stigmatisation may produce devastating effects for students labelled as learning disabled.

The label can be used to determine what and how these students can achieve, as well as what kind of supports available for them. The label attached to these students may legitimise exclusionary and marginalised practices that create barriers of learning which can impede them from gaining rich schooling experiences and being equipped with knowledge and skills which in turn may limit their further participation in education and society due to their differences.

The participating teachers' feelings of inadequacy in addressing student diversity implies the need for teacher education programmes that challenge and trouble current views of difference – views that are also manifested in society. This implication raises the concern of how teachers should and can attend to student diversity in their teaching practices; of how they can be supported to recognise that students are unique and different. To be inclusive, teachers need to cater successfully to the learning needs of diverse students. The challenge for school leaders and teacher educators, then, is to develop teachers' knowledge and understandings so that teachers are willing to work in a different way to provide high-quality education for all students (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) and to confidently teach to the precepts of student diversity and inclusive education (Sharma & Sokal, 2016). School leaders and teacher educators need to support teachers to develop and adapt various teaching strategies that are responsive to student

diversity (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). These fundamental changes, however, must first address the underlying beliefs and values which shape the cultures of classrooms, schools, and our wider society, and promote understandings of and attitudes towards inclusion.

8.2.2. Student voice

The notion of difference, which was communicated to the students in the classrooms where I conducted my research, created negative attitudes and social barriers to participation for the students labelled as learning disabled. It also lessened the likelihood of them being valued and becoming respected group members alongside their peers. Similar to other research (see, for example, MacArthur, Higgins, & Quinlivan, 2012), an underlying message highly evident in my study is that those whose identities are labelled as different are at risk of being restricted from joining and participating in learning activities. When the students labelled as learning disabled did have opportunity to speak, they faced potential derision and shaming by their more academically able peers. Student voice seeks to promote reform process by inviting students to actively engage and exercise their agency to initiate changes and recognise potential possibilities to address problems related to their schooling life, to enable them engage in civic engagement through student-school partnerships that may improve classroom practices (Mitra, 2018).

Teachers need to recognise that this lack of respect for others by more able students must be challenged and changed. Appreciating and respecting the views of students labelled as learning disabled should be foundational in an inclusive class environment. Furthermore, not accepting the type of taken-for-granted assumptions of winners and losers evident in the primary classrooms of the two Indonesian schools needs strong leadership by teachers and school leaders. The complexity of marginalisation within the classroom context requires consideration of the voices of students labelled as learning disabled. Their voices and experiences matter. Scrutinising what is happening in the classroom requires careful reflection by teachers. Students labelled as learning disabled's articulation of their lived experience can inform what needs to be changed and so help improve teaching and learning for all students in classrooms, schools, and society. The voice of students labelled as learning disabled, as Messiou (2006, 2008) suggests, is significant for providing another point of view which facilitates consideration of alternative explanations and actions that make it possible to grapple with and overcome issues related to marginalisation and inclusion.

8.3. Limitations

My doctoral research has several limitations that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting its findings. First, this study was conducted in two primary schools in one province in Indonesia, and the findings are particular to those schools and that context. Consequently, caution should be taken in applying the findings more generally.

A second limitation is that my study involved the perceptions of teachers and students only. Including parent voices may have added further depth to the findings, especially in terms of gaining better understanding of students labelled as learning disabled and insights into their experiences as learners. Teachers and parents might have different ideas regarding how to approach and incorporate students labelled as learning disabled in learning, as well as how to ensure their inclusion among peers. I decided not to include parents because of the difficulty of finding suitable times to meet them. The parents of most of my participating students were full-time workers.

Third, my position as an outsider illustrated the challenges I had when negotiating my boundaries with my participants. I had to constantly evaluate my research strategies, either through boundary breaking or boundary building (Thurairajah, 2019). Developing rapport with teachers and students became my strategy for gaining their trust as they shared their experiences.

At the same time, I had to be vigilant not to convey my personal views to my participants. I allowed the situation to be as natural as possible so that I could gain a thorough understanding about what was happening in the classrooms as demonstrated by my participants in their day-to-day classroom situations.

8.4. Future directions for further studies

The findings chapters all imply suggestions for further research. Future studies could focus on investigating the teachers' teaching beliefs, values, assumptions, and philosophies underpinning their practices in their classrooms. Understanding teachers' beliefs, views, and assumptions would be valuable in providing further insight into how teachers' roles and powerful positions shape their responses to student diversity, with those responses creating a classroom climate characterised by either inclusion or exclusion for students. Each student labelled as learning disabled should be viewed as unique individual who has a different profile of difficulties.

Teachers should be encouraged to develop their ability to identify and evaluate by questioning why they employ certain pedagogical strategies in their teaching contexts. Working with inclusive schools may be beneficial as this can be assumed that school staff has been situated and equipped to work with student diversity. However, what is important is to promote all schools to be inclusive, which means that schools accept diversity as something to be

welcomed and celebrated. Teacher training can provide teachers with knowledge and skills that are helpful for teachers to teach diverse students. Teacher training help teachers develop positive attitudes to inclusive education.

Examining parent voice about their beliefs and attitudes toward learning disabilities is also merited. There is a need to understand parents' perspectives as well as teachers' perspectives on learning disabilities. In particular, it would be valuable to recognise parents' constructions of learning disabilities and the effects the meanings of those constructions have on children labelled as learning-disabled. Listening to what parents think could also add to understandings of what inclusion means, what matters for their children labelled as learning disabled's schooling experiences, and their beliefs and views about their learning-disabled children.

8.5. Lessons learned

This study provided and contributed to a deeper understanding of teachers' constructions of learning disabilities in Indonesia, and how their constructions affected the way they orchestrated teaching and learning when dealing with students labelled as learning disabled in everyday classroom life. Working with inclusive schools may somewhat provide further benefits as the school's staff have been equipped with knowledge and skills to teach

students with diverse needs. This study demonstrated that teacher should be supported through training that provides opportunities for teachers to challenge their beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and practices about their students and pedagogical practices.

The study provided one particularly important insight gained from the voices of students labelled as learning disabled as classroom members. The stories of the students labelled as learning disabled in this study are at the heart of the thesis. Listening to the views of students whose voices are likely to be absent in research is paramount to ensure that their experiences matter. Their contribution in this research showed that their experiences were significant in helping us to better understand what was happening in the two Indonesian classrooms.

This study also contributed to an appreciation of the challenge associated with supporting students labelled as learning disabled such as Wawan and Nining to learn, achieve, and participate in regular school settings. More studies into this situation should be undertaken as part of effort to promote inclusion and full opportunities for all students to achieve success and be a welcome and participating member of their class. How these students were viewed by teachers and other students influenced the way they were treated in the classrooms. Repetition of such perceptions and beliefs

reinforced the dichotomising concepts of able and less able in daily classroom and/or school lives. These concepts not only reproduced divisions amongst the students, but also resulted in different learning opportunities and outcomes for them.

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Appendix A. Information sheet for participating teachers

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Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a public primary school in Indonesia

1 December 2016

Information Sheet for participating teachers

Dear teachers,

My name is Costrie Ganes Widayanti. I am a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia and a PhD student at the College of Education University of Canterbury, New Zealand. For my PhD thesis, I am currently undertaking a research project on “Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in Public Primary School in Indonesia” under the supervision of Prof. Missy Morton and Dr Brigid McNeill.

This research project aims at gaining a rich and comprehensive understanding of issues and challenges of the practice of social inclusion in a regular public primary school level in Indonesia. A regular public primary school is a governmentally funded school that is not officially registered as an inclusive school but in practice, they also receive students with disability such as students with learning disabilities/ LD.

This project will involve an ethnographic case study in one public primary school in Semarang, Central Java Province, Indonesia.

As an ethnographic case study, I will conduct the research within the school for 3 to 5 days per week from January to August 2017, (excluding exam periods, school break, school holidays, and national holidays, including the Eid and Ramadan).

I will be observing and participating in classrooms and other school activities, interacting and having conversations with all school stakeholders, such as students, parents, parents/caregivers and a head of school. I will not teach the class and will be a passive observer.

I will conduct observations inside and outside the classroom, in different venues, such as during the break and at playtime, in the playground, in the library, sport, and extracurricular activities. She will take notes during observation.

I will also interview the head of school, students, teachers, an administrative staff (if possible), and parents/ caregivers to talk about their experiences and perspectives in a more formal/arranged way, either individually or in a group. The place and time can be arranged in different days, depending on the participants' availability. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and I will take note during the interviews. I will send the interview transcripts for review (the participants may add or delete any information).

The focus group discussions will involve between 6 and 10 people, consisting of students, teachers, and parents/caregivers of students with LD. The length of the discussions will be from 30 to 45 minutes for students and between 45 and 60 minutes for teachers and parents. They may participate either in the individual interviews or the group discussions or both in the individual interviews and the group discussions. The focus group discussions will be recorded and she will take note during the group discussions. The transcripts of the group discussions will be sent to group discussion members for review. The participants are welcome to participate in the interviews and/or the focus group discussions.

I will also ask the students to draw a picture on a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. The drawings will take between seven to ten minutes. The students will also be asked to take photographs about their daily activities at school and at home.

I will also request to have access to and/ or seek permission to have a copy of relevant school documents (such as a school charters, circulars, and lesson plans).

Participation in this research project is voluntary and that my participants can withdraw their participation at any stage without penalty. I will ask consent from each participant.

Participation or non-participation will not impact the school and each participant's relationship with the University of Canterbury and the University of Diponegoro, Semarang.

I understand that during the data collection, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will know each other. Also, non-participating stakeholders may know the participants of this study. However, to minimise this risk, the school and the individual identities will be described in a way that readers could not be able to identify either the school or the participants. I will use pseudonyms to describe the school, its location, and the participants during the process of data analysis.

It also applies on the drawings and the photographs in which I will make them anonymous. If the student participants draw or take photographs of a person and/ or people, I will not describe the person and/ or people captured in the images, I will analyse how my student participants give meaning to the images they take. I will also not describe the setting in details about where the photographs are taken, as well as the portrayed setting in the images to protect the anonymity.

I will provide a copy of their drawings and photographs at the end of the data collection process in a sealed envelope. I will keep the original versions for analytical purposes only. I will need a separate consent from the student participants in case the publications of their drawings and the photographs are needed.

All the data will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at the university office. I also will use a password university computer to storage both the raw data and the analysed data of my participants' information. Also, both raw and analysed data will be securely stored on a password protected UC desktop computer and laptop at the university office. Data will be retained for 10 years after the study is published, and after this period they will be destroyed.

The results of this study will be used for my thesis which is publicly available through UC library, presented in national and international conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals.

A full report (in English) and/or a summary of the findings of my study (in English and in Bahasa Indonesia) will be provided for the participants. Copies of the summary will be written in English and in Bahasa Indonesia, will be provided to the relevant authorities, the school, and all participants.

This research project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury

Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand

Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my supervisors. My contact details and those of my supervisors at the University of Canterbury, as well as the local contact are given below.

If you approve for this study to proceed, please complete the attached consent form and contact me to discuss a good time for me to collect the consent form. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Costrie Ganes Widayanti

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Appendix B. Information sheet for parent/caregiver permission for student participation

Telephone: +64 21 2316 940 (NZ); +62 813 2527 9611 (Indonesia)

Email: costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a public primary school in Indonesia

1 December 2016

Information Sheet for Parents of Participating Students

Dear parents/caregivers,

My name is Costrie Ganes Widayanti. I am a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia and a PhD student at the College of Education University of Canterbury, New Zealand. For my PhD thesis, I am currently undertaking a research project on "Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in Public Primary School in Indonesia" under the supervision of Prof. Missy Morton and Dr Brigid McNeill.

This research project aims at gaining a rich and comprehensive understanding of issues and challenges of the practice of social inclusion in a regular public primary school level in Indonesia. A regular public primary school is a governmentally funded school that is not officially registered as an inclusive school but in practice, they also receive students with disability such as students with learning disabilities/ LD.

This project will involve an ethnographic case study in one public primary school in Semarang, Central Java Province, Indonesia.

As an ethnographic case study, I will conduct the research within the school for 3 to 5 days per week from January to August 2017, (excluding

exam periods, school break, school holidays, and national holidays, including the Eid and Ramadan).

I will be observing and participating in classrooms and other school activities, interacting and having conversations with all school stakeholders, such as students, parents, parents/caregivers and a head of school. I will not teach the class and will be a passive observer.

I will conduct observations inside and outside the classroom, in different venues, such as during the break and at playtime, in the playground, in the library, sport, and extracurricular activities. She will take notes during observation.

I will also interview the head of school, students, teachers, an administrative staff (if possible), and parents/ caregivers to talk about their experiences and perspectives in a more formal/arranged way, either individually or in a group. The place and time can be arranged in different days, depending on the participants' availability. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and I will take note during the interviews. I will send the interview transcripts for review (the participants may add or delete any information).

The focus group discussions will involve between 6 and 10 people, consisting of students, teachers, and parents/caregivers of students with LD. The length of the discussions will be from 30 to 45 minutes for students and between 45 and 60 minutes for teachers and parents. They may participate either in the individual interviews or the group discussions or both in the individual interviews and the group discussions. The focus group discussions will be recorded and she will take note during the group discussions. The transcripts of the group discussions will be sent to group discussion members for review. The participants are welcome to participate in the interviews and/or the focus group discussions.

I will also ask the students to draw a picture on a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. The drawings will take between seven to ten minutes. The students will also be asked to take photographs about their daily activities at school and at home.

I will also request to have access to and/ or seek permission to have a copy of relevant school documents (such as a school charters, circulars, and lesson plans).

Participation in this research project is voluntary and that my participants can withdraw their participation at any stage without penalty. I will ask consent from each participant.

Participation or non-participation will not impact the school and each participant's relationship with the University of Canterbury and the University of Diponegoro, Semarang.

I understand that during the data collection, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will know each other. Also, non-participating stakeholders may know the participants of this study. However, to minimise this risk, the school and the individual identities will be described in a way that readers could not be able to identify either the school or the participants. I will use pseudonyms to describe the school, its location, and the participants during the process of data analysis.

It also applies on the drawings and the photographs in which I will make them anonymous. If the student participants draw or take photographs of a person and/ or people, I will not describe the person and/ or people captured in the images, I will analyse how my student participants give meaning to the images they take. I will also not describe the setting in details about where the photographs are taken, as well as the portrayed setting in the images to protect the anonymity.

I will provide a copy of their drawings and photographs at the end of the data collection process in a sealed envelope. I will keep the original versions for analytical purposes only. I will need a separate consent from the student participants in case the publications of their drawings and the photographs are needed.

All the data will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at the university office. I also will use a password university computer to storage both the raw data and the analysed data of my participants' information. Also, both raw and analysed data will be securely stored on a password protected UC desktop computer and laptop at the university office. Data will be retained for 10 years after the study is published, and after this period they will be destroyed.

The results of this study will be used for my thesis which is publicly available through UC library, presented in national and international conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals.

A full report (in English) and/or a summary of the findings of my study (in English and in Bahasa Indonesia) will be provided for the participants. Copies of the summary will be written in English and in Bahasa Indonesia, will be provided to the relevant authorities, the school, and all participants.

This research project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury

Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand

Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my supervisors. My contact details and those of my supervisors at the University of Canterbury, as well as the local contact are given below.

If you approve for this study to proceed, please complete the attached consent form and contact me to discuss a good time for me to collect the consent form. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Costrie Ganes Widayanti

Contact details:

Costrie G. Widayanti

Faculty of Psychology
Diponegoro University
Jl. Prof. Sudarto, SH
Kampus Tembalang 50275
Semarang, Indonesia
Telp: +62 24 746 0051
Fax: +62 24 746 0051
Cell: +62 832 5279 611 (INA)
+64 21 231 6940 (NZ)
costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Prof. Missy Morton

University of Canterbury
College of Education
School of Educational Studies
and Leadership
Private Bag 4800, Christchurch,
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Telp: +64 3 364 2987 ext. 44312

missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz

Dr Brigid McNeill

University of Canterbury
College of Education,
School of Teacher Education
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brigid.mcneill@canterbury.ac.nz

Local contact

Ika Febrian Kristiana
Faculty of Psychology, Diponegoro University. Jl. Prof. Sudarto, SH Kampus Tembalang 50275
Semarang, Indonesia. Telp: +62 24 746 0051; Fax: +62 24 746 0051
Cell: +62 815 7565 1525 (INA)
ika.f.kristiana@gmail.com

Appendix C. Information sheet for participating students

Telephone: +64 21 2316 940 (NZ); +62 813 2527 9611 (Indonesia)

Email: costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a public primary school in Indonesia

1 December 2016

Information Sheet for Students as Participants

Dear students,

My name is Costrie Ganes Widayanti. I am a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia and a PhD student at the College of Education University of Canterbury, New Zealand. For my PhD thesis, I am currently undertaking a research project on “Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in Public Primary School in Indonesia” under the supervision of Prof. Missy Morton and Dr Brigid McNeill.

This research project aims at gaining a rich and comprehensive understanding of issues and challenges of the practice of social inclusion in a regular public primary school level in Indonesia. A regular public primary school is a governmentally funded school that is not officially registered as an inclusive school but in practice, they also receive students with disability such as students with learning disabilities/ LD.

This project will involve an ethnographic case study in one public primary school in Semarang, Central Java Province, Indonesia.

As an ethnographic case study, I will conduct the research within the school for 3 to 5 days per week from January to August 2017, (excluding exam periods, school break, school holidays, and national holidays, including the Eid and Ramadan).

I will be observing and participating in classrooms and other school activities, interacting and having conversations with all school stakeholders, such as students, parents, parents/caregivers and a head of school. I will not teach the class and will be a passive observer.

I will conduct observations inside and outside the classroom, in different venues, such as during the break and at playtime, in the playground, in the library, sport, and extracurricular activities. She will take notes during observation.

I will also interview the head of school, students, teachers, an administrative staff (if possible), and parents/ caregivers to talk about their experiences and perspectives in a more formal/arranged way, either individually or in a group. The place and time can be arranged in different days, depending on the participants' availability. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and I will take note during the interviews. I will send the interview transcripts for review (the participants may add or delete any information).

The focus group discussions will involve between 6 and 10 people, consisting of students, teachers, and parents/caregivers of students with LD. The length of the discussions will be from 30 to 45 minutes for students and between 45 and 60 minutes for teachers and parents. They may participate either in the individual interviews or the group discussions or both in the individual interviews and the group discussions. The focus group discussions will be recorded and she will take note during the group discussions. The transcripts of the group discussions will be sent to group discussion members for review. The participants are welcome to participate in the interviews and/or the focus group discussions.

I will also ask the students to draw a picture on a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. The drawings will take between seven to ten minutes. The students will also be asked to take photographs about their daily activities at school and at home.

I will also request to have access to and/ or seek permission to have a copy of relevant school documents (such as a school charters, circulars, and lesson plans).

Participation in this research project is voluntary and that my participants can withdraw their participation at any stage without penalty. I will ask consent from each participant.

Participation or non-participation will not impact the school and each participant's relationship with the University of Canterbury and the University of Diponegoro, Semarang.

I understand that during the data collection, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will know each other. Also, non-participating stakeholders may know the participants of this study. However, to minimise this risk, the school and the individual identities will be described in a way that readers could not be able to identify either the school or the participants. I will use pseudonyms to describe the school, its location, and the participants during the process of data analysis.

It also applies on the drawings and the photographs in which I will make them anonymous. If the student participants draw or take photographs of a person and/ or people, I will not describe the person and/ or people captured in the images, I will analyse how my student participants give meaning to the images they take. I will also not describe the setting in details about where the photographs are taken, as well as the portrayed setting in the images to protect the anonymity.

I will provide a copy of their drawings and photographs at the end of the data collection process in a sealed envelope. I will keep the original versions for analytical purposes only. I will need a separate consent from the student participants in case the publications of their drawings and the photographs are needed.

All the data will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at the university office. I also will use a password university computer to storage both the raw data and the analysed data of my participants' information. Also, both raw and analysed data will be securely stored on a password protected UC desktop computer and laptop at the university office. Data will be retained for 10 years after the study is published, and after this period they will be destroyed.

The results of this study will be used for my thesis which is publicly available through UC library, presented in national and international conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals.

A full report (in English) and/or a summary of the findings of my study (in English and in Bahasa Indonesia) will be provided for the participants. Copies of the summary will be written in English and in Bahasa Indonesia, will be provided to the relevant authorities, the school, and all participants.

This research project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury

Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand

Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my supervisors. My contact details and those of my supervisors at the University of Canterbury, as well as the local contact are given below.

If you approve for this study to proceed, please complete the attached consent form and contact me to discuss a good time for me to collect the consent form. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Costrie Ganes Widayanti

Contact details:

Costrie G. Widayanti

Faculty of Psychology
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Local contact

Ika Febrian Kristiana
Faculty of Psychology, Diponegoro University. Jl. Prof. Sudarto, SH Kampus Tembalang 50275
Semarang, Indonesia. Telp: +62 24 746 0051; Fax: +62 24 746 0051
Cell: +62 815 7565 1525 (INA)
ika.f.kristiana@gmail.com

Appendix D. Consent form for participating teachers

Telephone: +64 21 2316 940 (NZ); +62 813 2527 9611 (Indonesia)

Email: costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a public primary school in Indonesia

1 December 2016

Consent form for Teachers as Participants

I consent to participate as *a participant* in the **Ethnographic Case Study** of the research project, ***Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in Indonesia***.

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the research project and what will be requested of me and the school in general in the project.

These are briefly listed here:

- The researcher will conduct the research within the school for 3 to 5 days per week from January to August 2017, (excluding exam periods, school break, school holidays, and national holidays, including the Eid and Ramadan).
- The researcher will be observing and participating in classrooms and other school activities, interacting and having conversations with all school stakeholders, such as students, parents, and a head school. She will not teach in any classrooms and will be a passive observer.
- The researcher will conduct observations inside and outside the classroom, in different venues, such as during the break and at playtime, in the

playground, in the library, sport, and extracurricular activities. She will take notes during observation.

- The researcher will also interview me, the head of school, students, an administrative staff (if possible), and parents/ caregivers to talk about their experiences and perspectives in a more formal/arranged way, either individually or in a group. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and she will take note during the interviews. I will be sent interview transcripts for review (I may add or delete any information).
- The focus group discussions will involve between 6 and 10 people, consisting of students with and without LD, teachers, and parents of students with LD. The length of the group discussions will be from 30 to 45 minutes for students and between 45 and 60 minutes for teachers and parents. They may participate either in the individual interviews or the group discussions or both in the individual interviews and the group discussions. The transcripts of the group discussions will be sent to me for review.
- The researcher will also ask the students to draw a picture on a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. The drawings will take between seven to ten minutes. The students will also be asked to take photographs about their daily activities at school and/or at home. The students will be asked to describe and explain about their drawings and photographs during the individual interviews.
- The researcher will request to have access to and/or seek permission to have a copy of relevant school documents (such as school charters, circulars, and lesson plans).

I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any stage without penalty.

I understand that participation or non-participation will not impact my school and each participant's relationship with both the University of Canterbury and the Diponegoro University.

I understand that during the data collection, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will know each other. Also, non-participating stakeholders may know the participants of this study. However, to minimise this risk, the school and the individual identities will be described in a way that readers could not be able to identify either the school or the participants. She will use pseudonyms to describe the school, its location, and the participants during the process of data analysis.

I understand that she will provide a copy of the students' drawings and photographs at the end of the data collection process. She will keep the original versions for analytical purposes only. She will need a separate consent from the student participants in case the publications of their drawings and the photographs are needed.

I understand that all the data will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at her university office. She also will use a password university computer to storage both the raw data and the analysed data of her participants' information. Also, both raw and analysed data will be securely stored on a password protected UC desktop computer and laptop at the University office of the researcher. Data will be retained for 10 years after the study is published, and after this period they will be destroyed.

I understand that the results of this study will be used for the researcher's thesis which is publicly available through UC library, presented in national and international forums, and published in peer-reviewed journals.

I understand that I will receive a full report of this study (in English) and/or a summary of findings in this study (in English and in Indonesian). I understand that copies of the summary will be written in English and in Bahasa Indonesia, will be provided to the relevant authorities, the school, and all participants.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Costrie Ganes Widayanti, or any of her supervisors, Prof. Missy Morton and Dr Brigid McNeill, or the local contact provided.

If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

Name:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Email address:

Phone number/ Mobile number:

(Please complete and sign this consent form and contact me to discuss when and where to collect the form. Thank you.)

Appendix E. Consent form for parents/caregiver permission

Telephone: +64 21 2316 940 (NZ); +62 813 2527 9611 (Indonesia)

Email: costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a public primary school in Indonesia

1 December 2016

Consent form for parents/caregivers' permission

I consent to

Student name:

Class:

participating in the research project ***Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities in a Public Primary School in Indonesia.***

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the research project and what will be requested of my son/daughter and the school in general in the project.

These are briefly listed here:

- The researcher will conduct the research within the school for 3 to 5 days per week from January to August 2017, (excluding exam periods, school break, school holidays, and national holidays, including the Eid and Ramadan).
- The researcher will be observing and participating in classrooms and other school activities, interacting and having conversations with all school stakeholders, such as students, parents, and a head school. She will not teach in any classrooms and will be a passive observer.
- The researcher will conduct observations inside and outside the classroom, in different venues, such as during the break and at playtime, in the playground, in the library, sport, and extracurricular activities. She will take notes during observation.
- The researcher will also interview my son/daughter, the head of school, teachers, an administrative staff (if possible), and parents/caregivers to talk about their experiences and perspectives in a more formal/arranged way, either individually or in a group. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and she will take note during the interviews. My son/daughter will be sent interview transcripts for review (my son/daughter may add or delete any information).
- The focus group discussions will involve between 6 and 10 people, consisting of students, teachers, and parents/caregivers. The length of the group discussions will be from 30 to 45 minutes for students and between 45 and 60 minutes for teachers and parents. They may participate either in the individual interviews or the group discussions or both in the individual interviews and the group discussions. The transcripts of the group discussions will be sent to my son/daughter for review.
- The researcher will also ask the students to draw a picture on a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. The drawings will take between seven to ten minutes. The students will also be asked to take photographs

about their daily activities at school and/or at home. The students will be asked to describe and explain about their drawings and photographs during the individual interviews.

- The researcher will request to have access to and/or seek permission to have a copy of relevant school documents (such as school charters, circulars, and lesson plans).
- I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that my son/daughter may withdraw my participation at any stage without penalty.
- I understand that participation or non-participation will not impact the school and each participant's relationship with both the University of Canterbury and the Diponegoro University
- I understand that during the data collection, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will know each other. Also, non-participating stakeholders may know the participants of this study. However, to minimise this risk, the school and the individual identities will be described in a way that readers could not be able to identify either the school or the participants. She will use pseudonyms to describe the school, its location, and the participants during the process of data analysis.
- I understand that she will provide a copy of the students' drawings and photographs at the end of the data collection process. She will keep the original versions for analytical purposes only. She will need a separate consent from the student participants in case the publications of their drawings and the photographs are needed.
- I understand that all the data will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at her university office. She also will use a password university computer to storage both the raw data and the analysed data of her participants' information. Also, both raw and analysed data will be securely stored on a password protected UC desktop computer and laptop at the University office of the researcher. Data will be retained for 10 years after the study is published, and after this period they will be destroyed.

- I understand that the results of this study will be used for the researcher's thesis which is publicly available through UC library, presented in national and international forums, and published in peer-reviewed journals.
- I understand that I will receive a full report of this study (in English) and/or a summary of findings in this study (in English and in Bahasa Indonesia). I understand that copies of the summary will be written in English and in Bahasa Indonesia, will be provided to the relevant authorities, the school, and all participants.
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Costrie Ganes Widayanti, or any of her supervisors, Prof. Missy Morton and Dr Brigid McNeill, or the local contact provided.

If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

Name:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone number/ Mobile number:

(Please complete and sign this consent form and contact me to discuss when and where to collect the form. Thank you)

Appendix F. Consent form for participating students

Telephone: +64 21 2316 940 (NZ); +62 813 2527 9611 (Indonesia)

Email: costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a public primary school in Indonesia

2 January 2017

Consent form for Students as Participants

I consent to participate as *a participant* in the **Ethnographic Case Study** of the research project, ***Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in Indonesia***.

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the research project and what will be requested of me and the school in general in the project.

These are briefly listed here:

- The researcher will conduct the research within the school for 3 to 5 days per week from January to August 2017, (excluding exam periods, school break, school holidays, and national holidays, including the Eid and Ramadan).
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- The researcher will conduct observations inside and outside the classroom, in different venues, such as during the break and at playtime, in the

playground, in the library, sport, and extracurricular activities. She will take notes during observation.

- The researcher will also interview me, the head of school, teachers, an administrative staff (if possible), and parents/caregivers to talk about their experiences and perspectives in a more formal/arranged way, either individually or in a group. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and she will take note during the interviews. I will be sent interview transcripts for review (I may add or delete any information).
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- The researcher will also ask the students to draw a picture on a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. The drawings will take between seven to ten minutes. The students will also be asked to take photographs about their daily activities at school and/or at home. The students will be asked to describe and explain about their drawings and photographs during the individual interviews.
- The researcher will request to have access to and/or seek permission to have a copy of relevant school documents (such as school charters, circulars, and lesson plans).
- I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any stage without penalty.
- I understand that participation or non-participation will not impact my school and each participant's relationship with both the University of Canterbury and the Diponegoro University.
- I understand that during the data collection, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will know each other. Also, non-participating stakeholders may know the participants of this study. However, to minimise

this risk, the school and the individual identities will be described in a way that readers could not be able to identify either the school or the participants. She will use pseudonyms to describe the school, its location, and the participants during the process of data analysis.

- I understand that she will provide a copy of the students' drawings and photographs at the end of the data collection process. She will keep the original versions for analytical purposes only. She will need a separate consent from the student participants in case the publications of their drawings and the photographs are needed.
- I understand that all the data will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at her university office. She also will use a password university computer to storage both the raw data and the analysed data of her participants' information. Also, both raw and analysed data will be securely stored on a password protected UC desktop computer and laptop at the University office of the researcher. Data will be retained for 10 years after the study is published, and after this period they will be destroyed.
- I understand that the results of this study will be used for the researcher's thesis which is publicly available through UC library, presented in national and international forums, and published in peer-reviewed journals.
- I understand that I will receive a full report of this study (in English) and/or a summary of findings in this study (in English and in Bahasa Indonesia). I understand that copies of the summary will be written in English and in Bahasa Indonesia, will be provided to the relevant authorities, the school, and all participants.
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Costrie Ganes Widayanti, or any of her supervisors, Prof. Missy Morton and Dr. Brigid McNeill, or the local contact provided.

If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

Name:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone number/ Mobile number:

(Please complete and sign this consent form and contact me to discuss when and where to collect the form. Thank you.)

Appendix G. Research assent form for participating students

Telephone: +64 21 2316 940 (NZ); +62 813 2527 9611 (Indonesia)

Email: costrie.widayanti@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Research project title:

Social Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities

In a Public Primary School in Indonesia

2 January 2017

Research Assent Form

Project Title: Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in a Public Primary School in Indonesia

Investigator: Costrie Ganes Widayanti



What is a research study?

Research studies help us learn new things. First, we ask a question. Then we try to find the answer.

This paper talks about my research and the choice that you have to take part in it. I want you to ask me any questions that you have. You can ask questions at any time.

Important things to know...

You get to decide if you want to take part.

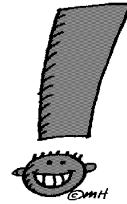
You can say 'No' or you can say 'Yes'.

No one will be upset if you say 'No'.

If you say 'Yes', You can always say 'No' later.

You can say 'No' at any time.

We would still take good care of you no matter what you decide.



Why are we doing this research?

We are doing this research to find out more about belongingness at school



What would happen if I join this research?

If you decide to be in the research, we would ask you to do the following:

Individual interviews: You will be asked questions regarding your activities with your teachers and peers in school and peers at home. Then you would say your answers out loud. I will take notes and audiotape your answers. You can choose either the individual or the group talking, or both the individual and group talking.

Focus groups: You will be asked questions together with some peers at the same time about your activities with your teachers and peers during the school hours. You are expected to say your answers out loud. You are welcome to join either focus groups or the individual interviews, or both focus groups and the individual interviews. I will take notes and audiotape your answers.

Observation: During the school hours, you will see me in your classroom and I will sit at the back to see how you interact with your teachers and peers. I will also see your interaction outside the classroom, such as the break, sport and extracurricular activities. I will take notes during the observation.

Drawings: You are asked to draw in a piece of paper about what it is like to be at school. You are allowed to use colours as you are pleased. I will ask you to describe your drawings in the individual talking.

Photographs: You are asked to take photographs about your daily activities with teachers and peers, when you are at school and at home. You can use my camera only for two days consecutively and you are free to take some photographs during that time. Then I will ask you to choose one photo you like and you are asked to describe it during the individual talking.



Could bad things happen if I join this research?

Some of the questions might make you uncomfortable or might be hard to answer. You may feel embarrassed but I will try to make sure that no bad things happen.

You can say 'no' to what we ask you to do for the research at any time and we will stop.



Could the research help me?

This research will not help you. I do hope to learn something from this research though. And someday I hope it will help other kids about their interaction with teachers and peers like you do.



What else should I know about this research?

If you don't want to be in the study, you don't have to be

It is also OK to say yes and change your mind later. You can stop being in the research at any time. If you want to stop, please tell the research doctors.

You would not be paid to be in the study.

You can ask questions any time. You can talk to me either in person or in a group. Ask me any questions you have. Take the time you need to make your choice.



Is there anything else?

If you want to be in the research after we talk, please write your name below. I will write my name too. This shows we talked about the research and that you want to take part.

Name of Participant _____

(To be written by child)

Signature of Participant _____

Date

Time

Name of Researcher _____

Date

Time

Original form to:

Research File

Copies to:

Parents/Caregivers

Appendix H. Ethics approval

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson

Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588

Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz



Ref: 2016/61/ERHEC

27 February 2017

Costrie Ganes Widayanti

EDSL

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Costrie

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal “Social Inclusion of Students with Learning Disabilities in a Public Primary School in Indonesia” has been granted ethical approval.

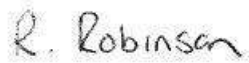
Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 22nd December 2016 and 17th February 2017.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely



PP

Patrick Shepherd

Chair

Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

Please note that ethical approval relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research.

F E S

Appendix I. Transcript coded data

<p>Barriers to participation: Being excluded by peers</p>	<p>Mrs. Lestari : ‘Whoever comes forward to sing, I will give you a high score! You can sing in pairs.’</p> <p>As I look at some of the groups, my attention is fixed on Santi and Nining. They are standing behind Nining’s desk while looking at the girl groups. Santi looks anxious because she has no group. She is holding Nining’s right hand. She tells Nining,</p> <p>Santi : ‘Nining, you are with me, ok?’ (glances at me, no smiling)</p> <p>Nining looks quiet staring at Santi. None of the students approach them, asking them to join.</p> <p>Santi : ‘We do not have a group.’</p> <p>Nining : (quiet, looking at other students)</p> <p>She does not reply to Nining’s statement. She looks around, hopelessly. Santi talks again to Nining, I hear the sound of panic in her voice, saying</p> <p>Santi : ‘No one wants us’</p> <p>Then Mrs. Lestari decides the students to have a break, ‘It’s good that we take a break now so that you can practice. It’s a group singing, one group consists of five people!’ Mrs. Lestari repeats her request that each group must list members of the group, one group consists of five (5) persons. Desi approaches and tells her that her group members are only three (3) persons, she mentions the name of the three.</p>
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	<p>Desi : ‘My group is only three persons. Can we just be three? Please?’ (begging)</p> <p>Mrs. Lestari: (listening) ‘then you should recruit Santi, Nining and Nay. The group members have been decided, it should be five (5) persons per group. You still need two persons.’</p> <p><i>Desi : (loudly saying), ‘But they are so, so, so, slow, Mrs. Lestari! They can ruin our group!’</i> (staring at Santi, Nining, and Nay consecutively).</p> <p>Mrs. Lestari: (softly voice) ‘Well, they are your friend, aren’t they? (you) can teach them. Ok?’</p> <p>Desi and the two girls show their unwelcome look over Santi and Nining. Then, they walk in the front corner of the class while watching at Santi and Nining. Meanwhile, Santi is sitting in Nining’s chair while playing her stationery. Santi is standing, looking at them. They wave their hands over Santi and Nining, their face looks angry. Santi is standing closely to Nining, with her anxious face she tells Nining, softly,</p> <p>Santi : ‘Nining, I don’t think they want us to be in their group!’ (repeatedly)</p> <p>Nining gives no reply. Santi holds Nining’s left hand as if they are inseparable. Nining is silent and looks at Mrs. Lestari.</p>
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Appendix J. Classroom observation

Age of student :

Date of observation :

Time :

Description of student:

Location :

IN CLASSROOM

1. Management and organisation of learning: number of students in class, gender composition
2. Classroom environment: (eg. Layout, displays of students' works)
3. Organisation of class (eg. Big class/small group/ individual-paired work)
4. Learning activities: students are encouraged to help each other/students are encouraged to have contribution/ LD students are taught together with other students/ teacher gives opportunity for students to work with others/ students are encouraged to share knowledge and skills

OUTSIDE CLASSROOM

1. Number of children involved:
2. The environment
3. Kind of activity (sport/leisure time/play)
4. Activity organisation (eg. Big group/small group/individual-paired activities)
5. Activities: children can be actively involved in the activities/ children can initiate the activities/ established rules for children in doing the activities.

Appendix K. Fieldnote

Location: Class 4

Time: 09.30-11.30 hrs

The researcher enters the class 10 minutes before the next lesson. Some students seem to gather around the table, some still finishing the task. As I entered, I sat next to a male student on the front seat. I asked him 'what task are you doing?' He replied '[it's an] Indonesian' as he turned the pages of paper and continues writing in thick notebooks with a patterned yellow cover.

I then stood up and strolled backwards, and I stopped at Santi's desk who was in the class finishing the Indonesian language. She holds a white pen and an open, but unwritten, notebook. I ask her, 'Can I sit here?' She looks at me nodding her head.

Teacher asked all the students to enter the class. She tells the students in front of the class 'eating should be stopped' and the teacher asks the students to throw the food outside, and not in the small bin located in the corner near the blackboard. A male student threw food in the trash can and she looked at him, asking him to remove the trash can outside.

The teacher starts the lesson. She asks the students to answer the questions from the workbook about a story. She reads the questions and then points of the students to answer the question. She asks Santi to read the answer, but Santi does not answer the teacher's question. She asks Santi, "what can your eyes see, is it physical or characteristics?" Santi does not reply. She [the teacher] repeats the question and asks Santi to respond. Some students raise their hands, but she says to them "Who am I asked?"

when discussing questions. The teacher seemed to be typing some student answers on the laptop. Teacher several times seemed to repeat the answer.

Appendix L. Interview guide

Topics	Guiding questions
Students' and teachers' understanding of disability	What do you understand about learning problems?
Learning and belonging	<p>Students:</p> <p>What do you understand about belonging? What challenges do you have to feel belong in this school?</p> <hr/> <p>Teachers:</p> <p>Tell me your experience working with students labelled as learning disabled! How does students labelled as learning disabled influence the way of your teaching and learning? How do you deal with students labelled as learning disabled? What is your understanding about social inclusive practice?</p>
Belonging, learning, and explicit strategies	<p>Students:</p> <p>Could you tell me your experience when you feel belong in your school? Could you describe how some students do not feel belong in your school? What kind of activities do you have when you are included and not included?</p> <p>Teachers:</p> <p>How do the learning strategies you use can help learning-disabled and peers to feel belong? How do you encourage students to interact each other during the learning process in your classroom? Give examples What policies do you think have contributions to</p>

	the development of social inclusion in your school?
Friendship and participation	<p>Student</p> <p>Who are the popular and unpopular peers in your class? How do you interact with your peers in class?</p> <p>Teacher</p> <p>How do you describe the interaction between you and your students in class?</p>