

INTERNALIZATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE WITH DISABILITY THEME

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to describe the internalization of inclusive education through children's literature with the theme of disability. The research data are words, phrases and sentences in the children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*, which shows the internalization of inclusive education values, shown by the character Margit, and other characters. The research data source is the children's story *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*, written by Franz-Joseph Huainigg, published in 2003. Data collection involved utilizing note-taking techniques to capture key aspects of the narrative. Subsequently, all gathered data underwent analysis using both a referential identity approach and reflective, introspective methods. The results of this study show that literary works, especially children's literature, can be a beneficial media for internalizing inclusive education. The introduction and internalization of inclusion education values through children's literature with disability themes is relevant to develop children's positive character. It is in consonance with what Horace stated about the function of literature that not only entertains but also educates. The internalization of inclusive education values through disability-themed children's literature, both receptively and productively, is expected to help overcome the problems of implementing inclusive education in Indonesia so that equality in education, as all people aspire to, can be realized.

Keywords: internalization, inclusive education, children's literature, character building

Education is a fundamental right, so that it should uphold social justice and equality, which are manifested in daily educational practices. However, the implementation of educational equality has not been fully realized, especially for children with disabilities. Due to their limitations, not all children with disabilities receive equality in education (Cologne, 2022). To overcome this situation, there must be awareness about inclusion as the human right of the child to have an equal opportunity and access

to learning and education (Merrigan & Senior, 2023).

Therefore, the effort to raise the awareness of inclusivity in daily life should begin early on. To realize this purpose, inclusive education should be implemented, because it fosters recognition and positive outlook on diversity, along with opportunities for developing social skills (Paul et.al., 2022). At the core of inclusive education is the belief that all children can learn together in one school, achieved by eliminating

barriers that may hinder participation and success (Tiernan, 2022). Through the implementation of inclusive education, children with disabilities who experience both physical and mental limitations get their rights to carry out education in their respective environments. Inclusive education is crucial to be applied well in accordance with the expected goals, because this education service provides many benefits for both people with disabilities and other educational subjects.

The trend of inclusive education has gained worldwide attention due to its diverse dynamics and policies (Teodoro, 2020; Chowdhury, 2011). However, even though there has been implementation of inclusive education in school that has been carried out, there are still some problems that occur. The enactment is not as envisioned as it can be seen on several aspects, i.e. teachers' knowledge and skills, facilities, student attitudes towards special needs students, parental involvement, curriculum development, costs, and collaboration issues (Puernomo, 2016; Ediyanto, et.all, 2023). It indicates that inclusive education should find an alternative way to be internalized.

One way to instill the value of inclusion in education is by using children's literature, or known as *Kinderliteratur* in German. Luukka (2023) in her research entitled "Meanings Attributed to Literature in Language Education" found that literature has potential as an alternative way to teach inclusion because literature forms a text to which individuals and institutions attach ethical, aesthetic, cognitive, affective, social, historical, and existential values. Since it is intended for children and interpreted by children, it has an important role to shape the children's character because literature moves emotions and feelings that are in the affective scope without neglecting the rationalization (Nurgiyantoro, 2012; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017). By reading children's literature with the theme of disability, there is a hope that children will achieve a better understanding of the conditions of children with disabilities.

Paseka & Schwab (2020) stated three indicators for a good inclusive teaching practice: an interesting content that related to student's life, the use of alternative methods, raising interest in asking questions or offering interesting material, and the chance to build a

good cooperation between students, pedagogical staffs related and/ or psychologist. Children's literature could be a medium that fulfills the criteria above. In addition, children have more opportunities to explore the meaning of diction and other literary devices found in literary works. Through the story, children can reflect deeper on a situation that they often face or even have never faced. For example, children's literature that focuses on the theme of disability will sensitize and hone children's affection, cognition and psychology. Thus, children can not only develop critical thinking, but also their imaginative abilities.

Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl by Frans Joseph Huainnig is one of the children's literature that can be used as a medium in implementing inclusive education. This children's book describes a little girl named Margit who has a physical disability so that she has to walk using a wheelchair. The introduction of disability-themed children's literature can be a good means to instill positive values in children. These values could be internalized and become an integral part of their character. The internalization of character education values through children's literature with the theme of disability is in accordance with Horace's statement about the function of literature that is not only entertaining but also useful (*dulce et utile*).

Based on the explanation above, this article aims to describe the internalization of inclusive education through children's literature with the theme of disability. The problem of this research is then formulated to two points, namely (1) the depiction of disability in the children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* by Verena Ballhaus & Franz-Joseph Huainigg and (2) the identification of inclusion education values contained in it. Based on the result, the further discussion about some ideas to internalize inclusion values through children's literature and so that good character building occurs in children as story readers.

METHOD

The approach employed in this study is qualitative, focusing on non-numeric data that pertains to the quality of verbal expressions and utterances. The primary data source is the children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*,

authored by Franz-Joseph Huainigg and published in 2003. However, the research specifically examines the words, phrases, and sentences within this children's book to explore the internalization of inclusive education values, exemplified by characters like Margit and others.

Data collection involved utilizing note-taking techniques to capture key aspects of the narrative. Subsequently, all gathered data underwent analysis using both a referential identity approach and reflective, introspective methods (Sudaryanto, 2015). The instrument utilized in this study is the researcher themselves (human instrument). The researcher will meticulously conduct readings of children's books to gather the necessary data for the research process.

For data analysis, a normative analysis method was utilized, incorporating Sudaryanto (2015) perspective on employing the referential identity method (also known as the referential

equivalent method) and introspective reflexivity. The data analysis procedures involved: (1) reading and analyzing the portrayal of characters with disabilities in "Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl"; (2) identifying the values of inclusion depicted in the narrative; (3) determining the efforts aimed at internalizing inclusive education values through the story; and (4) drawing conclusions and reporting the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The Depiction of Disability

The depiction of disability in *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* focused on Margit. Margit is the main character in this story. Based on the close reading, these are several aspects of disability depiction in the story.

Tabel 1. Aspects of Disability Depiction in *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*

No	Aspects	Description
1.	The type of disability	Physical
2.	The background of disability	Paralyzed since birth
3.	The characterization of main character as a person with disability	Willing to help, big curiosity, independent and not wanting to be pitied
4.	The problems	Unpleasant stare from others, bullying, insecurity, miscommunication, the lack of suitable facilities for disabilities
5.	The act of community towards disability	Helping, pitying, care with disabilities
6.	The character development	The discomfort of being an object of pity, self-acceptance, the confidence to express the feeling and opinion

Based on the data in table 1, it shows that *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* describes a disability, namely: person with disability can be independent, the discomfort of being an object of curiosity and pity, the interaction with the disability, and the act to communicate. Margit is a little girl who has a physical disability, namely not being able to walk or paralyzed since birth, so to walk she uses a wheelchair. Margit considers her wheelchair as her legs, because she always uses it everywhere. The story says that she has been paralyzed since her birth (Huainigg, 2003: 15). Although she is paralyzed, she wants to be considered a normal child, like other children.

She hoped that people would also think of her as a normal child. Margit repeatedly states that she is the same as other children (Huainigg, 2003: 8). She puts on her own clothes and shoes, even though it is rather difficult to do so. She tries to do things herself and is proud not to be served by others (Huainigg, 2003: 1). With her limitations, Margit enjoys helping her mother. When her mother asked her to go shopping, she also answered happily and proudly. Although it was for the first time she went shopping at the supermarket, she did it happily (Huainigg, 2003: 4).

The character Margit in the children's story is described as an independent child who does

not want to be pitied. Along her way to the supermarket, she has to deal with the stare of people on the street. It gives her confusion and discomfort (Huannig, 2003: 6). Another example is when a little girl asked about Margit's wheelchair. That is actually a simple question and Margit wants to answer it, but the mother scolds the little girl due to her question. The girl's mother probably worries about how Margit would think due to the question. However, it was the reaction of the girl's mother that made Margit feel uneasy and sad. Again, an unpleasant situation happened when an old couple saw her and said "so young, so sad" (Huannig, 2003: 12).

This story also depicts daily interaction of able-bodied persons with disabilities, in this case, Margit. When the people in the city see Margit walking in her wheelchair, many greet her, try to help her when she crosses the street, and also help her. What makes Margit angry is that when Margit is in the supermarket and wants to get something, there are always waiters or other shoppers who help her get it. This makes Margit furious and cry (Huainigg, 2004: 15).

The city people are willing to assist Margit, even without Margit asking. These enactments may look as care and charity toward the person with disability. However, this book gives an insight that it actually invalidates the agency of Margit as a person with disability. Being kind and willing to help others should have been a necessity, not only towards the person with disability but also each other. This book gives a new perspective to consider each person's capability and agency in doing something.

This book shows that communication could open a better understanding towards each other. It depicts Margit's interaction with Sigi, a boy whom she met at the crossroad. Sigi greeted her first and offered to help Margit to cross the road after introducing himself to Margit.

Both Sigi and Margit have different physical condition from the other children: Sigi with his fat body and Margit with her wheelchair. During their talk, Margit argues that despite her wheelchair, she is the same with other children. Both of them talk about each other's concern and opinion about their perception of their condition. Sigi explains that even though Margit was able to do things on her own, Margit sometimes still needed other people, so Margit also had to be willing to ask for help from others.

At the end of the story, Margit was able to accept her condition as suggested by Sigi. Although Margit didn't like being helped, she had to accept the help of others when she needed it. Margit is also braver to express her thoughts, which can be seen at the moment Margit reported the police about the unfriendly facilities for a wheelchair-bound person like herself at the crossroads. The police responded attentively and promised to report to his major immediately (Huainigg, 2003: 20).

From the depiction above, it can be seen that a person with disability has the agency to be independent and does not want to be pitied. Margit's story sets a good example for children with disabilities to employ it in their daily life. On the other hand, the awareness about how to interact with disabilities is a point supposed to be nurtured. The Interaction between Margit and Sigi show that communication is a way to open up an understanding and the acceptance of self and other's condition. It also emphasizes the act of being polite, considerate and ready to help while respecting the agency of other people.

In addition, this book also shows how the community should act towards people with disabilities. There is also an example of how the government handles the complaints of its citizens swiftly, in this case people who have difficulty walking with their wheelchairs. The description of the way people respond to the limitations experienced by a person with disability is an attitude that every citizen should develop.

From the depiction of disabilities in the storybook *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*, there are three important points that can be found. First, this literary work presents a relatable example through the independence of Margit's character. Through the figure of a girl who uses a wheelchair, *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* illustrates that character as the basis for personality formation is prioritized. This story illustrates that people with disabilities are able to do things independently, including finding a way out of difficulties by seeking information and assistance to be able to solve these problems. This way of finding solutions is the main point of independent character (Mumpuniarti, 2016).

Second, this children's story is useful for children in general to develop positive characters in themselves. For example, from the character of Sigi who does not hesitate to communicate

with Margit, children learn not to ignore people with disabilities. On the other hand, children with disabilities can be encouraged to appear confident in interacting with others. Third, children's literature can be a kind of simulation space for children to be able to identify the values contained in this work, for example the values of inclusion. Ultimately, children's stories are beneficial for the formation of children's characters who have broad insights into independence, diversity, care, and tolerance.

Based on this explanation, it can be said that children's stories that feature characters with disabilities such as Margit in the children's story *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* are unique and

interesting stories that contain character education. This is in line with the function of literature expressed by Horace, which is not only entertaining but also useful (*dulce et utile*).

The Values of Inclusion Education

Inclusive education encompasses more than just providing quality education during learners' time in school; it serves as a fundamental requirement for social inclusion in further and higher education, employment, and community life (Kefallinou et al., 2020). Therefore, *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* depicted four values of inclusive education which can be identified as can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. The Value of Inclusive Education Found in *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*

No	The Value of Inclusive Education	Description
1.	Equality	Children learn that people with disabilities want to be treated equally with other children
2.	Diversity	Children learn about the diversity around them, that not all children are the same as themselves
3.	Human Rights	Awareness of the fundamental rights that people with disabilities also have needs to be known by people with disabilities, but also by those around them
4.	Humanity	Through these literary works, children as readers can identify themselves, both as people with disabilities and as children who interact with people with disabilities

Based on the data in Table 2, it shows that *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* illustrates the value of inclusive education, namely: equality, diversity, human rights, and humanity. Equality is a condition or state in which everyone is treated fairly, without exception, and with respect (Parr & Campbell, 2012). An example of this form of equality can be found in the children's literature *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*. From the characters Margit and Sigi, children learn to understand children with disabilities, consider them equal to others and do not discriminate against them. Through this awareness of the value of equality, children are expected to appreciate and value each other's existence.

Children's literature featuring characters with disabilities gives children a new experience that there is another world that is different but close to their daily lives. This provides an opportunity for children to observe the differences and similarities they have with each

other. Margit's character also provides a critical perspective in accepting differences, in this case, for example, physical conditions and mobility abilities. By understanding the lives of children with disabilities, children can learn to understand the lives of children with disabilities and learn independence from them. It can also increase their social sensitivity in facing life in the future.

The rights of persons with disabilities are enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. In Indonesia, these rights are enshrined in Law No. 19/2011 on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Margit's story illustrates the feelings of discomfort experienced by people with disabilities. People tend to look at them differently and give assistance without asking for consent beforehand. Disability is not seen as a part of society, rather it is considered a part of poverty whose existence is used to show moral messages about faith, patience, healing

power and miracles (Turner, 2018). The awareness of the fundamental rights that people with disabilities have needs to be known by everyone. Not only in terms of attitudes, this awareness of human rights also includes an overview of the infrastructure which is not yet adequate to support the mobility of people with disabilities, as experienced by Margit.

Human values function to direct and provide control over attitudes, behavior and actions that are in accordance with human dignity and dignity both with themselves, with fellow humans, nature and God (Sayidiman et al., 2022). Human values are elements that have a major role in maintaining the survival of a community (Boleng, 2018). Through this literary work, children as readers can identify themselves, both as people with disabilities and as children who interact with people with disabilities. By understanding the condition of someone with a disability, children can increase their sensitivity, care and tolerance.

The understanding of the inclusive values which have been found in *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* can transform into a positive character that needs to be raised from an early age. Equality, diversity, human rights, and humanity are complicated concepts that actually need to be comprehended in a suitable way for children. This shows how children's literature is able to convey these concepts. By reading the lives of people with disabilities which are depicted in a story, children can learn to broaden their perspective on life and social interactions. It can also improve their ability to process their thinking and determine their attitude in the future.

Discussion

The character of Margit in the children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* can be a reference in the development of children's character. Thus, Margit's story is an example of how literature for children is not only entertaining but also useful. As readers, children can identify good characters that they can emulate. Children literature contains a story that provides a variety of expressive content, a series of event and illustrates a character in which children can learn about themselves, other people and the world (Halimah et al., 2020). Along with this, children can also understand the

conditions of people, specifically a person with disabilities so that they can increase their concern for others.

Furthermore, there are four reasons why children's literature is an appropriate means to build character and instill inclusive values in children, namely (1) it features characters that can be used as a reference for children to understand values, both positive and negative values, (2) literary works are able to offer alternative idealized life models such as how to think, behave, feel, act, (3) children's literature is literature intended for children so that it tries to convey a problem with children perspectives, (4) in daily life, not all children have the opportunity to interact directly with people with disabilities, so that children's literature featuring characters with disabilities provides new experiences to children, that there is another world that is different from what they usually face.

There are several principles used in inclusive education: (1) the principle of equity and quality improvement, (2) the principle of diversity, (3) the principle of meaningfulness, (4) the principle of sustainability, and (5) the principle of engagement (Rahman et al., 2023). To internalize the values of inclusive education, the efforts can be done at two levels, namely the receptive level and the productive level. The receptive level can be done by reading children's literature with a disability theme, in this case reading the children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*, while the productive level can be done by writing children's literature with an inclusivity theme after reading and observing the conditions in their environment.

The efforts to nurture and internalize inclusion values can also be carried out in receptive and productive levels. Children's literature can also function in receptive and productive skills in the process of developing literacy skills.

The first level is the receptive level, one of which is by reading literary works as a space for children to interact with literary works. This activity will be optimized if there are parents or teachers who can open a discussion room with children after the reading is done. The expected result of this activity is the growth of children's ability to determine attitudes and decisions in their daily lives.

Through the positive character of Margit, children as readers of these children's stories can take positive values so that they can apply them in their daily lives, especially when interacting with characters with disabilities. Children can develop the values of inclusion education, namely equality, diversity, respect for human rights and humanity after reading and discussing the positive character of Margit in the children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl*. In this way, it is hoped that the values of inclusion can be conveyed and internalized by children as the next generation of the future.

With regard to the internalization of inclusion values in schools, children's literature can be the answer to the need for a source as well as a means of literacy movement that highlights inclusion values. In this case, the selection of children's literature reading is adjusted to the chosen theme, namely the theme of inclusive education so that the reading books chosen are also children's stories with disability themes. Children book, especially the one that has pictures and illustration, are suitable and needed as a tool for nurturing the awareness of disability and building friendship in inclusive schools (Wardany et al., 2018). Teachers can act as reading curators who create reading packages that contain inclusion values.

Although the reading pack is teacher-curated, learners are free to choose which book titles interest them. This is a way to instill the value of inclusiveness as part of character building and competency improvement to create a chance that help learners to develop their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, viewed as a facet of personality, is pivotal for children who possess a sense of empowerment, exhibit a can-do attitude, persist in their endeavors, and attribute their successes to their own competencies and efforts (Velten, 2022).

In the receptive stage, literature can serve as reference material, documentation and information for learners. Children's literature, for example, can be an option in cultivating the development of learners' literacy skills because it takes into account the developmental elements of learners according to their age ((Nurgiyantoro, 2012). Children's literature certainly presents linguistic components and literary content that are appropriate to their cognitive and psychological aspects. In addition, children's literature is also diverse, both domestic and

foreign, so that children can realize that these inclusive values apply universally.

From the linguistic aspect, teachers can become mentors so that children do not hesitate to combine local languages that function as their first language of communication with Indonesian and foreign languages that have been learned at school. Children can realize that the use of language has a sense of language that is expressed in the choice of words. Through this process, children can rationalize the way they express their intention, especially when they interact with people with disabilities. This is important to break the negative stigma that is often attached to people with disabilities.

Literature not only provides an opportunity for language to fulfill its function as a means of communication but also provides imagination, to appreciate the different roles and functions of the languages they learn. Education aims to equip learners with extensive experience in solving problems encountered in their daily environment. Therefore, all elements involved in education should be able to provide opportunities for learners to learn to solve problems that exist in life.

The second level in the process of internalizing the values of inclusive education is the productive level. After reading, the teacher invites students to observe the social conditions around their place of residence. Students are motivated to find inclusivity issues that exist around them and write it as a poem, short story or drama. This process can stimulate students to think critically, to be creative, to develop imagination and to practice communication skills. Furthermore, the literary works created by these students can provide real experiences and contribute to life issues, such as concern for diversity and equality.

Children's book *Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl* contains the values of inclusivity which include equality, diversity, human rights and humanity. The content of these values proves that children's literature can also be a means to convey messages to children on how to think, behave, and act according to certain norms. Literary works can appear by offering alternative idealized life models such as how to think, behave, feel, act, how to view and treat things, behave, and others (Turan & Ulutas, 2016).

In addition to the values of inclusive education, there are four reasons why children's literature is an appropriate means to build character and instill inclusive values in children, such as (1) it features characters that can be used as a reference for children to understand values, both positive and negative values; (2) it offers alternative idealized life models such as how to think, behave, feel, act, (3) it is intended for children and interpreted by children; (4) In everyday life, not all children have the opportunity to interact directly with people with disabilities, so that children's literature featuring characters with disabilities provides new experiences to children, that there is another world that is different from what they usually face.

Considering the reasons above, children's literature, especially those with disability themes, is an appropriate tool to build character and instill the value of inclusion in children. First, children's literature features characters that can be used as references for children to understand values, both positive and negative values. Basically, children's literature works in the affective area, in the realm of emotions and feelings without neglecting the ratio, in the realm of something that emphasizes the importance of beauty, in the metaphorical realm that is all indirect.

Secondly, literary works are able to offer alternative idealized life models such as how to think, behave, feel, act, how to view and treat things, behave, and others. Character education via literature holds significance as it encompasses not just cognitive elements but also affective and behavioral dimensions (Muassomah et al., 2020).

Third, children's literature is literature intended for children, as well as literature interpreted by children (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017: 7). It is a literary work created to be read to children or read by children themselves, which includes all genres in literature that are also suitable for reading by adults (Kurwinkel & Schmerheim, 2020: 3). Usually, the characters featured in children's stories are child characters, so the story is also seen from the child's perspective.

Fourth, in everyday life, not all children have the opportunity to interact directly with people with disabilities, so children's literature featuring disabled characters gives children a

new experience that there is another world that is different from the one they usually face. Through literature, children can learn good values and practice them in their daily lives when they encounter similar problems.

This internalization process, which involves receptive and productive stages, provides opportunities for learners to map, reorder and hone their potential abilities. Thus, learners' agency is recognized and can be enhanced. Learners are not passive targets of environmental influences but have their own agency, creating new values, making their own choices and creating their developmental environment and future life path (Salmela-Aro, 2017).

After the internalization process, both receptively and productively, it is expected that the absorption of inclusive education values can occur. With an increase in children's understanding of the values of inclusive education, it is hoped that problems in the application of inclusive education in Indonesia can be overcome, so that educational equality can be achieved and the goals of national education can be equally realized.

Franz-Joseph Huainigg, the writer, provides a concrete example of how to internalize inclusion values through children's literature. Huainigg is also known as a politician who often voices his opinion on disability issues (Holzfeind, 2022). One of them is the "Nichts in Dunkel" campaign, which is his reaction and criticism of the image of people with disabilities who are presented as objects of pity. In this campaign he also demanded better social integration. He is also a prolific Austrian writer with a doctorate in German Studies. He is also known as the founder of the Wiener Krüppelkabaret and initiated the "Ohrenschmaus", a literary award for deaf people in Austria. In 2009, he was awarded Silbernes Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik Österreich.

By bringing the biography of the writer in the discussion of the book, the learner could get a holistic understanding that the inclusivity is not merely a story. It could enhance and compliment the internalization process of the learners and perhaps strengthen their awareness to respect and treat everyone equally.

CONCLUSION

Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl presents a positive character picture in the form of Margit's independence and becomes a kind of simulation space for children to be able to understand the conditions and social interactions of people with disabilities. This book also contains inclusion values which include equality, diversity, human rights and humanity. These inclusion values become more meaningful through internalization efforts that can be done by writing and reading children's literature with disability themes. Thus, children can increase their sensitivity and care in their daily lives in the future

The results of this study also show that literature, especially children's literature, can be one of the media used to internalize inclusive

education. Through children's literature, positive inclusion education values can be instilled. This is in line with the function of literature, which is not only entertaining but also educational, in this case, educating children to appreciate those around them and treat them well and proportionally.

The increase in children's understanding of the values of inclusive education after reading books of children's literature with disability themes and identifying the positive character values in these children's literature works is expected to support the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. Thus, educational equality can be achieved and the goals of national education can be realized.

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