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# Special Education: A Comparison Between Special Education in Bali and in America

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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# SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Comparison Between Special Education  
In Bali And In America

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SIT Study Abroad

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*“Every student can learn, just not on the same day, or in the same way.”*  
**George Evans**

I want to thank everyone in Indonesia who made my study abroad experience unforgettable. To my beautiful and loving host families who took me in and treated me like family. To all of my educators for giving me the information to learn and the opportunity to soak in the culture. To all my interviewees for their time and knowledge. To Bu and Yudi for being my translators.

And, most importantly, to my family back home. To Grampy, for being one of the most amazing grandfathers I could ever ask for. To my mom and dad, who have made everything in my life possible and continue to surprise me with their generosity and love. And to my two older sisters, Mara and Katrina, who have inspired me to try to be half as incredible as they are today.

KMKMJ.

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## **Abstract**

*In America, education is very highly valued. America believes that everyone has the right to education. Traditionally, students complete about 12 years of primary education before they continue on to college and then possibly graduate school. However, in Indonesia, specifically Bali, education is not seen as anything that should take priority over any other activity. Now lets shift the focus into a more specific kind of learning: special education. Special education for special needs people is a progressing teaching system that is continuously being developed in both Indonesia and America.*

*This paper will attempt to assess the special education systems in Bali, Indonesia and Massachusetts, America. By reviewing literary sources, conducting in-depth qualitative interviews, and including many hours of observation, this document with further research previously done on the topic of special education and come up with some new ideas how to better education for special needs individuals.*

## **Introduction**

According to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, special needs are defined as "the individual requirements (as for education) of a person with a disadvantaged background or a mental, emotional, or physical disability or high risk of developing one".<sup>1</sup> Imagine having a special needs child. Now imagine that this child is deprived of a normal education and in turn is seen as a lesser human being. Unfortunately, this is the case for many families that have special needs children. Providentially, Bali, Indonesia and Massachusetts, America are doing all they can to make sure that all children have equal opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> "Special Needs." *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, 2013. Web. 8 Apr. 2013. <[http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/special needs](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/special%20needs)>.

History dates the beginning of special education in the United States to the late 1940s, after World War II. After awareness was spread, increasing school access for special needs individuals was provided in the 1960s. On November 29, 1975, Congress approved the “Education for All Handicapped Children Act” that protected special individuals rights and gave federal funding to education for special needs people, including “physical handicaps, mental retardation, speech, vision and language problems, emotional and behavioral problems, and other learning disorders.”<sup>2</sup>

The “Education for All Handicapped Children Act” was extended in 1983 to include training for the parents and to provide information centers. Early intervention followed the very next year and in 1990 the act was renamed IDEA, or “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.” IDEA has been accountable for supplying education to over 6.5 million people annually in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In Bali, Indonesia, the government supports special education, but the quality of education that the students receive is far below what they deserve. Special education in Bali was discovered in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century and when the Dutch entered Indonesia, large strides were made to better education.<sup>4</sup>

Government run special education schools are called SLB (Sekolah Luar Biasa) schools. They are split into four main sections: (A) blind children, (B) hearing impaired children, (C) children with learning disabilities, and (D) physically disabled children. This paper will be taking a closer look at the C children.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "History of Special Education." *History of Special Education*. N.p., 2003. Web. 25 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.learningrx.com/history-of-special-education.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> “Pendidikan Anak Luar Biasa.”

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

Special education should be valued just as high as any other type of education. Kids with special needs should not be viewed with lower status or looked at as dumb just because they may not necessarily learn, act, communicate, or even look the same way as other children. Instead, they should be able to learn with people who are willing to put their needs first and work with them in a way that fits their learning style.

### **Observations in America**

Because I come from a family who has all, at one time or another, worked with special needs individuals, I have observed and experienced many children and adults who have received special education. For the past two summers, I have been lucky enough to work at a summer school for mentally challenged children. I have worked with the same group of children two years in a row and have gotten to know the kids and see their progression from one year to the next.

Summer school for special needs children in Walpole happens three times a week for four hours a day (longer if you are in the extended program). At the beginning of the day, we meet the children outside when they are being dropped off by families and bus drivers, lead them to the classrooms, and begin their warm-up activity. The warm-up activity consists of silent individual work, a drawing or something that includes coloring in the correct numbers to create an image. This allows the children to prepare their brains for the more intensive work that will follow. After the warm-up, a short full class activity, dealing with numbers or time is done with the students.

Having three teachers in a classroom with eight to ten children is definitely beneficial to the children's learning. Because each child has a different learning disability, we continue after the full class activity to individual studies. We like to focus

each day on reading, writing, and math. Periodically, teachers for speech therapy and occupational therapy come in and take children one at a time or in groups of 3 to work on specific skills. These teachers are trained specifically for their job and are very experienced in their expertise.

When the children return, we have recess and a snack break, totaling about 45 minutes. We continue with reading, writing, and math for the rest of the day and then conclude with a closing activity with the entire class, often doing spelling bingo. We then shuffle the children silently outside to their buses or families and repeat the next day, for five weeks in total.

At the summer school in Walpole, us teachers make a constant effort to make sure that the children are behaving, using appropriate levels for their voices while they are inside, restraining from violent words or actions, and treating people respectfully. When they disobey one of these things, we make sure that they understand that it is not appropriate for them to act that way. It is important for these students to be treated like any other student. They will learn the same subjects, even if it takes a different style of teaching, and they will get the same treatment and consequences that every other student receives.

Personally, after being a one-on-one aid in a class of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, I can see how treating them like any other kid allows them to trust me and want to learn with me. I have seen time after time teachers treating students like babies. All these children want is to learn, have fun, and be treated like their age. However, it can be hard for some children to be motivated when their parents do not bring them to class or forget to pack them lunches. However, I believe that this summer program in Walpole has been very

advantageous to these children's education, allowing them to retain their skills and have a good start to the new academic year. I have seen these children improve academically, but also develop drastically as human beings.

The one day that I observed at the Walker School in Massachusetts, I saw a very similar educational setup to the summer school in Walpole. There were only about 10 children in one class with three teachers. When the students got loud or out of control, the teachers calmed them down with quiet distractions or allowing them to sit alone for a few minutes to gather their thoughts. Their interactions with the kids were firm yet playful, and I could tell that the kids believed in their teachers and enjoyed spending time with them.

### **Observations in Bali**

Since being in Bali, I have not really seen or heard of many kids with special needs. The more I asked about it, the sadder I became, because I learned that children with special needs are sometimes looked down upon, even by their own families. I began to ask questions, and soon I started my process in learning about special needs in Bali.

My first look into special education happened when I visited the SLB Sekolah Luar Biasa Ngeri school in Gianyar. I saw what looked like a nice place for learning, and my first impression of the staff was that they were very welcoming and kind. This school teaches mentally and physically disabled children from elementary up until high school.

On Tuesday, April 9, 2013, I had my first day of observation at the SLB school. I intended on observing a third grade classroom for C and C1 students, or ones with mental disorders, but came to find out it was for third and fourth graders. I instantly noticed that

the facilities were not big enough to support all of the students because classrooms were divided by bookshelves and cabinets.

To begin the day, at around 8:00 am, the children cleaned the classroom. I noticed that the 4<sup>th</sup> graders said “Selamat Pagi” to their teacher, followed by the day, date, and attendance of the students. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade was learning about science (“Energi”) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade was learning about letter-word connections. Both classes seemed very motivated and willing to work. The teachers gave the children plenty of time to complete their work but did not push them to work or put them back on track when they became distracted.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade schedule for the beginning of the day as was on the board was as follows:

Selasa 9-4-2013

Bahasa Indonesia!

Pagi ini saya pergi ke sekolah bersama teman-teman.

Kami masuk kelas dengan riang gembira.

Pelajaran yang kami dapat hari ini Bahasa Indonesia.

Kami belajar membaca dan menulis.

Kami senang, karna sekarang kami sudah bisa membaca dan menulis.

Made Desak Komang Arya

a-na=ana                      a-mo=amo

a-ni=ani                      a-me=ame

a-nu=anu                      a-ba=aba

a-no=ano

a-bi=abi

a-ne=ane

a-bu=abu

a-ma=ama

a-bo=abo

a-mi=ami

a-be=abe

a-mu=amu

The 4<sup>th</sup> grade schedule for the beginning of the day as way on the board was as follows:

Selasa 9-4-2013

IPA

Energi

Energi=tenaga

Energi manusia berasal dari makanan yang sehat.

Makanan yang sehat adalah ina kanan yang banyak me ngandung gizi.

Contoh makanan sehat:

1. daging
2. telur
3. tempe
4. tahu
5. ikan

Contoh minuman sehat:

1. Susu

4 sehat 5 sempurna:

1. nasi
2. lauk pauk
3. sayur
4. buah-buahan
5. susu

I soon realized that the teachers were not as invested in making sure the children were learning as teachers in Walpole. In total, there were two breaks, totaling over an hour in time, when they are scheduled to last 15 to 20 minutes each. During these breaks, the students were loud, destructive, and sometimes violent towards each other. The teachers were nowhere to be found, and when one passed by, they did nothing to stop the ill behavioral of the children. I felt hopeless because one girl was crying to me when a boy kicked her and telling me something but I could not understand. I tried to diffuse the tension by asking her to sit down and get her attention away from the boy.

After the breaks, I gauged that the children's energy levels rose drastically and the will to do work was practically gone. Another teacher came into the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and began to teach the children about religion, but the students' focus was very low. Kids were in and out of the room with no one telling them to sit down or to stay in one place. The noise level was very distracting as well. I could tell that the teachers really cared about the children, but maybe not as much the education of the children.

What I observed most about the first day was the there was such a big mix of disabilities on one classroom. I noticed a boy with downs syndrome, a girl with very

severe mental disabilities, and plenty of children who seemed to have nothing more than a case of ADD. It was hard for me to understand how such a mixed group of children were able to learn cohesively with each other when their specific needs were not getting tended to. The lesson was given to the children and taught the same way to everyone, assuming that all the students were able to learn the same way.

On the second day, Wednesday, April 10, 2013, the children were even rowdier than the day before. When I arrived to the site, the whole school was engaged in a ceremony for the New Moon. Class started late as a result and the children were excited from their morning activity. A boy pulled out a chair for me as I walked in, impressing me with his manners. I continuously noticed that all of the children were very polite to me!

While the students were learning, I took the opportunity to look around at the walls and interpret some things. I saw a poster on the wall outlining what a daily schedule should look like:

7:30-8:05

8:05-8:40 -- PKN

8:40-8:55 -- -O-

8:55-9:30 -- PKN

9:30-10:05 – B.INDO

10:05-10:20 -- -O-

10:20-10:55 -- IPA

10:55-11:30 -- IPA

11:30-12:05 – IPA

This schedule indicates that the children should only be allowed two breaks a day, for a total of 30 minutes. The schedule seems amazing, but the actual result of each day varied greatly from what was advertised.

I saw that the teachers only checked the work of the students who took initiative to come up to them. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher seemed specifically distracted, leaving the class numerous times, on her cell phone for almost the entire class, and playing American rap music on her computer while the students were working. After the second break of the day, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes had to combine because the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher did not return. The second day at the school seemed like it had gone downhill from the previous day, in both the efforts of the students and that of the teachers.

On my third day of observation, Thursday, April 11, 2013, I decided to overlook the freshman and sophomore classes of the high school. They are deaf and mute young adults. Again, the classroom was split into two halves. The sophomores were learning how to make handicrafts and the freshmen were learning about thermometers and different ways of measuring temperature. The students in the freshman class were very quiet and paying good attention to the lesson. The sophomore class was also attentive and willing to learn. Both teachers were very attentive to their students and were making sure that everyone was doing their work, however the freshman teacher had her little son in the class with her and he was very well behaved.

After the first break, another teacher came in to teach the freshman how to weave doormats from “unuseful shirts”. The students seemed excited to make the doormats and they did a beautiful job with them. I could sense a huge difference in the education levels in the elementary classes and the high school classes. However, I understood that the

children in the elementary level are C students, mentally disabled, and that the high school students have regular learning abilities, just altered hearing and speaking abilities.

From speaking to the teachers in the high school classes, I understood that they believed that C students would not really be able to do any of the things that “normal” kids could because their attention level is too low. They did believe that the deaf and mute were able to do things that were productive and useful after graduation. I observed enough to show me that not only is education for mentally challenged children not put as a huge priority, but also that the faith in these children is very low.

April 26, 2012 was the day that I went to the Youth Shine Academy. I met the principal and then walked into a classroom with seven students and three teachers. The classroom appeared to be very well equipped and sound for an educational setting. Each child had their own desk space and chair, a large whiteboard was in the front of the room, and there was an air conditioner in the classroom as well.

The children introduced themselves to me and the head teacher told me what each of their disabilities was: downs syndrome, ADHD, CP, and aspergers. It was obvious that some kids were much older than others and the teacher confirmed my suspicions, telling me that one of the boys was four years old but another was 15 (both have downs syndrome).

The children then began to work silently and diligently on their math problems. During math, teachers helped the kids one-on-one before coming together as a whole class and discussion the results. The problems on the board were as follows:

1. 213

524+

3. 142

532+

1. 325

4. 253

631+

142+

The children worked hard on their problems with the help of their teachers. On the wall, this list of words was taped up:

Ini	Hari	Bersih	Menari
Itu	Susi	Musik	Balongku
Abu	Adik	Hujan	Sekolah
Nana	Merah	Hendak	Membeli
Musa	Minum	Lilin	Bermain

Around 10:50 am, the children began to sing songs individually and then together as a class. Afterwards, the children began to draw as their last activity, and when one boy could not use the colored pencils that another student was currently using, he had a minor breakdown, throwing things on the ground, crawling, and pulling at kids limbs and clothes. However, the teachers diffused the situation very nicely and respectfully and then the children were picked up from their parents around 11:30 am.

For the short amount of observation I had at the Sjaki-Tari-Us school in Ubud, I noticed that there seemed to be about a one-to-one ratio of children to adults. I noticed a few local teachers, foreign teachers, and a couple of parents. The children were having fun playing badminton, riding bikes, kicking balls, and making music. They seemed to interact well with the teachers and each other and were very under control. One boy even came up to me to see what I was typing on my computer (which were my observations!). Sjaki-Tari-Us appeared to be a very comfortable place to learn and relax for the children.

## **Methods and Limitations**

A qualitative questionnaire was created to assess and inquire about special education in Bali. Teachers, parents, and outsiders were interviewed. The interviewees were asked to answer a set of questions that would help to ascertain about the special education system. \*Some of the interviewees' names have been changed in the following text. I also did hours of observation to have a basis to compare Bali's special education with that I know of America's.

I experienced a few limitations in my research for this paper. Because I do not speak Bahasa Indonesian very well, conducting interviews on my own with people who do not speak my language became a challenge and translators were needed. Scheduling interviews and working around other people's schedules was also hard but it became manageable. Probably the biggest obstacle was transportation. More often than not, public transportation took longer than expected and taxi drivers repeatedly convinced me they knew where they were going but ended up lost, forcing me to lose precious time for observation and interviews.

## **Findings/Interviews in Bali**

The first interview conducted was with I Gede Sukaca, S. Pd, principal of the SLB school in Gianyar. He received his diploma in Jogjakarta in 1985 and continued his undergrad in Tabanan, graduating with a bachelor in education in 2008. He continued to focus on working with mute individuals and found the SLB school in 1997.<sup>6</sup>

All the children attend the SLB school in Gianyar for free because it is a government run school, however the salary received from the government for the

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<sup>6</sup> I Gede Sukaca, S.Pd. Personal Interview. 11 April 2013.

teachers is not very good. Because of that, I Gede Sukaca believes that the teachers work for the children, not the money. 23 teachers work at the school with 10 part time teachers/volunteers. The teachers have to apply through the government to receive their job so they must have undergraduate degrees and, if possible, a major in special education. Once they are asked to be teachers, there is a 2-month training session for the teachers in Java. The children are split up according to their IQ, not their learning disability or the pace of their learning.<sup>7</sup>

Currently, 175 children from Gianyar are enrolled at the SLB school in Gianyar, ages 7 to 17. I Gede Sukaca explained mentally challenged children as C and C1 students, C being “almost normal” and C1 as more severe. These two classes are never mixed. It is very possible for C students to move to “normal” schools, but it takes a lot more time, if at all, for C1 students to reach that level. For C1 students, the teaching method is VERY simplistic. The topics taught to the children focus on life skills to give them independence.<sup>8</sup>

Parents really do care about their children and come to watch their kids at school sometimes. Over time, people’s perceptions of special education have changed because of the high support from the government. These children are now being treated as equals. I Gede Sukaca’s hope is that the children can live off of the life skills that they have learned at his school.<sup>9</sup>

When the bell rang and the kids were dismissed for the day, a young girl named Wayan\*, later found out to be the older sister of one of the students, told us her family’s

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

struggle to get her brother education. Wayan is 22 years old, a student in teacher training for 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sibling out of four. Her brother Ketut\*, the 4<sup>th</sup> sibling, was diagnosed with downs syndrome. At first, Ketut was sent to a “normal” kindergarten but the teachers could not handle him. They recommended that he get an IQ test, and when he did, found that it was as high as 3.5.<sup>10</sup>

Ketut’s family took him to the SLB school in Gianyar, but because of government tests, his IQ was lower than the standard of 50 to get accepted into the school. Soon, the family found Sjaki-Tari-Us, a non-governmental school in Ubud. After a year of steady progress, he passed the IQ requirement and was able to go to the SLB school in Gianyar.<sup>11</sup>

At first, when the boy’s family found out that he has downs syndrome, they were worried about his future. He contracted this disorder most likely because the mother did not know she was pregnant until five months in and was taking heavy medications at the time. The father wanted to abort but they decided to keep the baby. Families had many questions about Ketut and his disorder but there was no judgment; everyone supported the family and their want to provide him with education.<sup>12</sup>

When I was walking around Kuta one night, waiting for my mom’s plane to arrive, I happened to stumble across an autism awareness event. There were a lot of onlookers watching a performance put on by the Youth Shine Academy in Denpasar. Luckily, a mother of one of the students was willing to speak about her son and how the school attends to his special needs.

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<sup>10</sup> Wayan\*. Personal Interview. 11 April 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Novi, a 47-year-old mother to Oga, an 11-year-old to be, described his disability to be ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). His case is unique because he was “not born with [ADD], but got encephalitis at the age of two. He was [in a comma] for three weeks. When he recovered, he adopted the ADD, due to the weak connection of nerves to the brain.”<sup>13</sup> Novi and her family had lived in Jakarta and did not find the right school until she came to the Youth Shine Academy in Bali. “Most of the schools [they] visited were apparently money oriented. A friend recommended [the Youth Shine Academy], and after a three-month-trial, [Novi] found that the school is not money oriented and [the teachers] are truly sincere in helping the special needs kids.”<sup>14</sup> The Youth Shine Academy tries hard to motivate their staff to be there for the children, but inevitably some teachers are there for the money.

Several parents, in coordination with the school, want to develop a training center for special needs children. Their aim is to make these kids independent “so that they will not become the burden of the family and the society.”<sup>15</sup> They want to introduce majors such as cooking, farming, computer work, car engineering, and handicrafts.

There are over 20,000 kids with autism in Bali. “The number is apparently bigger than that, since there are lots of Balinese people ‘hiding’ their kids when they are not normal. They believe the children are abnormal because of curse or any other magic cause.”<sup>16</sup> Novi continued by saying that this ‘hiding’ happens more often in remote villages, but in Denpasar people are more aware of the special needs of children. However, the parents “have to be independent in pursuing the children’s education, since

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<sup>13</sup> Novi Sutanto. Personal Interview. 24 April 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

the government does not focus on this kind of education, especially for children with autism.”<sup>17</sup>

Novi reported that she thinks it is right for special needs children to go to special schools to prepare them for adaptation to society. “Most of the regular schools here are not prepared to accept the special needs children” and these kids are sensitive both mentally and physically, needing to have a special education first.<sup>18</sup> There are no qualifications needed to be accepted into the school and children range from ages three to 26. They also follow a regular curriculum and try to make the courses the same as those taught in regular schools.

Novi said that she is proud of her son. Oga is well disciplined, has a strong will to learn, and he is empathetic towards others. “I would never trade him with any other kid in the world!”<sup>19</sup>

When I visited the Youth Shine Academy, I was granted the pleasure of talking with Oga. He told me his name, age, that he was originally from Jakarta, and that his favorite subject was math.<sup>20</sup> Lucky for him, the children had just had a math class! Sitting with Jentina Yulyanti, the founder of the school as well as the principal, I was able to learn a lot about this school.

Yulyanti, 35 years old and originally from Denpasar, continuing her education degree on the island of Java, told me that she founded the school in 2002 with her husband after seeing an article on the front news of the paper in East Java about autistic children. It read that Bali was one of the first provinces in Indonesia that was aware of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Oga. Personal Interview. 26 April 2013.

autism. Because she has a nephew with this condition, Yulyanti began to learn about special needs and autism and came to the conclusion that these types of children deserve the education that all children should be entitled to.<sup>21</sup>

Starting in 2002, the Youth Shine Academy started for the purpose of therapy. They only had five students. In 2006, they began to discuss with the government about a school for special needs students. There is no law in Indonesia that supports children with special needs, so on their own, the Youth Shine Academy came up with their own funds from donors and parents. It costs about 10,800,000 rupiah a year to attend the school, and the parents pay as much as they can. This money goes towards the facilities, equipment tools for learning, and development of the program.<sup>22</sup>

Today, the Youth Shine Academy has 80 students, ranging from four-years-old to 26-years-old, in over six locations. There are four classrooms at the school in Denpasar and class happens five days a week from 8:00 am 12:00 am. The children's disabilities range from ADHD, CP, ADD, aspergers, downs syndrome, dyslexia, and many more. The Youth Shine Academy offers 12 grades but when they graduate depends on how they develop and when they are ready. These children attend this school because, first and foremost, the government does not acknowledge autism and the public schools do not allow special needs children in their schools.<sup>23</sup>

At the Youth Shine Academy, kids need to take a placement test from the government after completing an elementary program. This former education gives them the basis for the education they will receive. They must perform one-on-one therapies

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<sup>21</sup> Jentina Yulyanti. Personal Interview. 26 April 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

before integration into the school. Math, science, social skills, language, and art are all included in the Youth Shine Academy's curriculum. Their extracurricular activities range from swimming, taking trips to the markets to learn about fruits and selling, and trips to museums. The Youth Shine Academy likes to do these trips so that their children can experience real life things and be able to be like "regular" kids.<sup>24</sup>

35 teachers, all with university degrees in education, work at the Youth Shine Academy. Yulyanti said, "I must be honest" but most of the teachers work here for the money. She admitted that there is more pay at the Youth Shine Academy than at public schools but after three to six months the teachers understand that there is so much more than money that is offered at the school.<sup>25</sup>

The parents are an active part in their child's learning process, attending daily, monthly, and tri-monthly meetings with the school and other parents. They are required to write a statement each day about how their child did on their homework and the study tactics they used to practice with their child. At the tri-monthly meetings, parents make presentations about their children to the whole program. Contrary to the previous statements, there was one case where a father left his family because he gave birth to a girl with CP. These are the cases that make Yulyanti strong and wanting to have her schools last forever.<sup>26</sup>

A typical day at the Youth Shine Academy consists of "brain gym" where the students are allowed to open their minds up for the days work. They have to read 25 words every morning to expand their literacy skills. Then the students study all the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

government studies. Many children are very good at art so they hold art exhibitions for the children. Charities also invite them to sing and show their work. After the completion of school, students get jobs as carpenters, handymen, cashiers, etc. Some even continued to university, majoring in subjects like archeology and psychology. They are able to live on their own because they are taught the life skills they need to know.<sup>27</sup>

When asked about perceptions of special education in Bali, Yulyanti had very definitive answers. Many parents of special needs children, she said, think that they have these kids because God does not love them. Many feel embarrassed and hide their kids from other people. Five years ago, Yulyanti met a family that hid their child from two years of age until 14 years of age. They eventually understood that their child needed education and allowed the Youth Shine Academy to help him. Half of the children's families believe that their children do not need education but that is the total opposite. Another mother approached Yulyanti with the idea of withdrawing her child from the Youth Shine Academy because the priest at the temple told her that the evil in her child could be cured by holy water.<sup>28</sup>

The majority of people in Bali have the same perception of autism across the board. They believe that autism cannot be cured and that it is a huge burden for the families. Children are often treated like animals and disrespected. Every month, the Youth Shine Academy goes to teach people about autism for free, to tell people that autism is not impure or anything to be embarrassed about, in hopes of spreading awareness. They even invite government officials but not once have any of them listened or shown up to an awareness event. The President of Indonesia has aspergers syndrome,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

and this has caused many people to acknowledge autism. Hopefully in two or three years, people will realize that autism can be cured and that their education is proof that they can have bright futures.<sup>29</sup>

Sjaki-Tari-Us, a foundation in Ubud for mentally disabled children, preaches “Not less, but differently gifted!”<sup>30</sup> It was Dutch founded, and their mission is to spread their knowledge and expertise so that the education is right for the children. Sjaki-Tari-Us began in 2006 because of volunteers, and since then, the amount of volunteers has skyrocketed. They provide the children with schooling and also offer activities for visitors and community members to eat and play with the children, allowing them to have human interaction to test their skills.<sup>31</sup>

Principal Ibu Ilu has been the head of Sjaki-Tari-Us since 2007, graduating from Udayana University with a degree in English in 2005. Ilu first taught English in Gianyar and then found an ad for this school in the newspaper. She thought it was a “normal” school at first and was really surprised to find that it was for mentally handicapped kids. Because she needed the job, Ilu went and learned how to teach the children. Volunteers teach the teachers and then the teachers teach the parents and the kids.<sup>32</sup>

At first, there were only 6 kids that went to Sjaki-Tari-Us, but after going door to door to find children, they expanded their program. They now accept children from outside of Ubud and even provide transportation to get the children to and from the school. Children attend Sjaki-Tari-Us for free, getting no government support and only

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibu Mertasari. Personal Interview. 2 May 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

money coming in from Holland sponsors or guest donations. Six teachers and about four volunteers, most without degrees in special education, work with children from the ages of seven to 15 with disorders like downs syndrome, autism, late development, hyperactivity, and ADHD.<sup>33</sup>

At the beginning, the children are often very shy and either do not know how to speak or refuse to speak. To make it easier for the kids to learn, Sjaki-Tari-Us uses sign language in combination with oral communication so the kids can learn from different angles. After a three-week trial period of observation, the school decides which group to put the children in. There are four groups, ranging from most severe to least severe mental handicaps. Finding it important for the families to be involved in their children's education, Sjaki-Tari-Us does weekly visits to homes on Mondays and Tuesdays to check in and make sure everything is going well. They also have parents come into the school to do work with their kids!<sup>34</sup>

Sjaki-Tari-Us presented a schedule of their typical day:

8:30-9:00: Play Free

9:00-9:20: Sitting together in the circle

-Praying

-Siapa Ada

-Papan Picto

-Singing

9:20-9:45: Choosing Activity

9:45-10:00: Lesson (Body Part)

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

10:00-10:30: Eating+Drinking+Toilet/Outside: Bif motoric, play free

10:30-10:50: Sensopatic/Kamar Senso

10:50-11:00: Play Free/Music/Sensopatic

11:00-11:15: Siting together in the circle

-Siapa pulang

-Closing

Every year, there is an IQ test for kids over the age of seven. If their IQ is above 50, they can leave Sjaki-Tari-Us and go to a school like the one in Gianyar, but if it is under 50, they must stay at Sjaki-Tari-Us and continue to develop their skills. Typically, students stay for three to four years, but if needed, they may stay longer. Ilu says that when it comes to the staff, teachers are there for both the money and the children. Many teachers have left Sjaki-Tari-Us because they were not able to handle the special needs children and Ilu says what is “most important is their heart.” Teachers need to be able to connect with the children and have the patience it takes to do their job.<sup>35</sup>

At the beginning of Ilu’s search for special needs children, she said it was hard to find them because a lot of parents would hide their kids or lie about them. However, the more educated the parents are, the better the situation becomes. This is why Sjaki-Tari-Us makes a point of having the parents very involved. Now, parents are looking to organizations like this one to find education for their kids. Both the children and the parents have made major progress together. Ilu noted that as a teacher she feels really happy because the kids hold special places in her heart.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

In the remote village of Pura Pesagi, a 41-year-old teacher, Johan\*, and his 13-year-old daughter, Shinta\*, enlightened me with their knowledge and perceptions of special education. Shinta\* is in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, number one in her class, and very motivated to learn English and History. She said that children with mental disorders need to attend special schools to receive the right education. When it comes to knowing special needs individuals, she only knows one in her neighboring village. She is a nine-year-old girl and she does not attend school. Her family does not communicate with her, so, in addition to her mental disability, she also has lost the ability to speak properly.<sup>37</sup>

Tagging onto his daughters interview, Johan spoke about one student that he knew at the Bali-Hati school. This child was autistic and his parents appealed for him to be accepted into regular school. Johan, along with a panel of teachers, agreed to accept this student, but after only a year, his wild behavior was too much for the teachers to handle and he was no longer allowed to go to the school.<sup>38</sup>

Completing his undergrad and receiving a degree in English, Johan believes that everyone receives equal access to education, special needs children being no different. “It is their right as a human being” and there should be no discrimination between normal and special individuals. Today, more and more people are becoming aware of giving kids access to education. If these kids do not get their education, people may think that they are useless. Johan mentioned that there are now more NGOs that are specifically for special education, founded by many people outside of Bali and Indonesia.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Shinta\*. Personal Interview. 18 April 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Johan\*. Personal Interview. 18 April 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

Johan said that having kids with disabilities is still looked at as a disgrace for families in Bali. However, Johan does not see many kids with disabilities around because many kids hide their children for fear of scrutiny. Only those who have the money are able to afford therapy for their children. He continued saying that many C kids do not get jobs, live at home, and are not able to get married.<sup>40</sup>

Speaking on the quality of school in general, Johan admitted that the education system is not strong. The national exam is a countrywide exam that all students take, regular and special educated children. The problem with this is that all the students take this standard test, but the subjects that are taught to the special needs children and the “regular” children are not the same, therefore affecting the scores. He said that people’s perceptions of special education are that they will never go to the same schools as regular education children.<sup>41</sup>

### **Findings/Interviews in America**

Marjorie Dold, a 55-year-old teacher from Walpole, MA, graduated college with degrees in Psychology and Sociology and moved on to graduate school where she got a degree in Severe Special Education. Currently, she works as an ESL (English as second language) teacher, but prior to this job, she worked special education for her entire young adult life up until she had children. Marjorie worked with mild special education cases up to the most severe cases out there.<sup>42</sup>

Bird Middle School (BMS) is the school that Marjorie works at now. She says that BMS offers classes for mild to moderate special needs children. Most of the time,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Marjorie Dold. Personal Interview. 30 April 2013.

special needs children are integrated into class with the regular education kids, but if they need extra support, there will be aides in the classroom with them. There are “extra ‘support classes’ which focus on organization, learning and studying strategies, reinforcement of skills, and bolstering of foundational skills.”<sup>43</sup> There is also a more severe special needs child in a wheelchair that has a full time aide.

“There are also three classrooms with students ranging in needs from moderate (they have several ‘sheltered’ classes and much support including materials and staff) to severe (including intellectual, physical and behavioral)”<sup>44</sup>, said Marjorie. The teachers that work with these kids are trained to do safe and proper restraints if the children get out of hand. These students learn English language, Math, Science, and Social Studies. A lot of the time they participate in Art classes as well.

The amount of special education teachers exceeds those of regular education. In special education classes, there is at least one teacher and three aides to a classroom. The teachers must be qualified for their jobs, having “a teaching license to the subject which they teach, update with PDPs (professional development points) every five years (for EACH license held) and teachers must obtain a Masters degree within the first five years.”<sup>45</sup> Marjorie believes that every teacher works for the children, not for the money, and as a former student of BMS, I can confirm that!

After schooling, many students are able to live alone, with friends, or in group homes. Marjorie says, “All students...have unlimited potential!”<sup>46</sup> Today, she believes that “most people are accepting of diversity – including learning styles. The more severe

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

the disability, though, the more difficult for people to accept and interact with the student.”<sup>47</sup> Overtime, hopefully people will fully accept that having special needs does not make you a lesser person.

The Walker School in Massachusetts provides schooling for children, ages five to 13, with learning disabilities and developmental problems. Walker believes that all children can learn, therefore they make it their mission to make a schedule and treatment plan that will agree with all of the children. Walker knows that children should be treated as equals in their families, so they work to educate the families or find people to be families to the children. They want the children to be safe, respected and respectful, and to be continuously learning. To achieve this mission, they hire people with a background working with children, and they are more likely to hire if one has experience with special education.<sup>48</sup>

Katrina Dold, a third year employee at the Walker School, weighed in with her experience as a special educator. She is 26, graduated college with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology and East Asian Studies with a minor in Linguistics. At Walker, Katrina works as an assistant teacher in the stepping-stones program, one that focuses on autism and pervasive development disorder. Katrina teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math, fourth grade phonics, and low-second grade reading. There are nine classrooms with at least one teacher and two assistants in every room. Occasionally, there are high school volunteers that Walker accepts to help out at their school. Teachers need at least a bachelor’s degree

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> "Walker." *Walker*. N.p., 2013. Web. 30 Apr. 2013. <<http://walkerschool.org/>>.

to work at Walker and more experience to work as a residential assistant or to get a behavioral support position.<sup>49</sup>

In order to be a student at Walker, children have to be between the ages of five and 13 “with developmental difficulties including learning disabilities, chronic mental illness, language disorders, high-functioning autism spectrum disorders, and histories of high risk behaviors. Students at Walker School also may have suffered from severe trauma, histories of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, disrupted foster placements, failed adoptions, or psychiatric hospitalizations.”<sup>50</sup> Walker implements a plan to help the children with “the belief that all children can learn.”<sup>51</sup>

The teachers definitely work at Walker for the kids, Katrina laughed, as the pay is not high at all. The parents, however, are not as consistent with their care for the children. Katrina says that “some parents are very active, some [have] very limited involvement, [and] some students have no parents.”<sup>52</sup> Luckily for the families, they do not have to pay for their children’s education. The students get money from their school districts or the department of mental health. About 80 children attend school at Walker, having a very mixed array of disabilities, ranging from trauma-based behavior to autism to non-verbal learning disabilities. The children learn “math, reading, writing, social skills/social thinking, gym/health, art/expressive therapy, managing emotions clinical groups, OT groups, [and] speech groups.”<sup>53</sup> The subjects split the children into levels so they can learn with kids who learn at their speed.

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<sup>49</sup> Katrina Dold. Personal Interview. 30 April 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

The following is a schedule of the typical day at Walker:

8:30-9:00-Arrival/Morning Work

9:00-9:10-Morning Meeting/Circle Time

9:10-9:30-Letters and Sounds (phonics)

9:30-10:00-Math

10:00-10:10-Snack

10:10-10:40-Social Thinking

10:40-11:20-Writer's Workshop

11:20-11:45-Lunch

11:45-12:00-Read Aloud

12:00-12:35-Recess

12:40-1:00-Guided Reading

1:00-1:20-Science

1:20-OT group, Managing Emotions, other large group activities

2:00-2:10-Getting Organized

2:10-2:20-Goodbye Group/Wrap up circle

2:20-2:45-Game time

2:45-3:00-Dismissal

Students attend this school for as many years as it takes for them to be ready to graduate. "Sometimes, students return to less restrictive environments, however, they sometimes make parallel moves to other types of therapeutic schools."<sup>54</sup> Katrina is

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid

unsure about what kinds of jobs students get after school but she knows it is definitely possible for them to live on their own.

Katrina concluded by saying,

“I don’t know what all Americans think, but I think people with ‘special needs’ are often marginalized in the community. Kids with behavioral problems are considered a nuisance in typical settings, understandably due to unexpected behavior in community, but there is a very little understanding of psychiatric disorders in children. Additionally, I am especially bothered by the concept that students with Asperger’s/on the Autism Spectrum should be forced to comply with traditional academic structure. They require explicit social curriculum to address pervasive developmental difficulties that impact their entire functioning (academically, socially, behaviorally).”<sup>55</sup>

## **Discussion and Results**

It is seen that with practice and perseverance, people are usually able to achieve greatness. This was absolutely the case at a high school in West Hartford, Connecticut, USA. A junior boy with downs syndrome made a major leap to greatness; he was inducted into the National Honor Society by upholding a 3.6 grade point average. With his motivation, along with the help of his parents, his studying paid off and he achieved something that in the past, people thought were unattainable. His mother said, “He’s going to change the world, one person at a time. He’s a leader by being here, by being

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid

here and showing people what people with disabilities can do. We're incredibly proud of him."<sup>56</sup>

This is just one success story that gives hope for so many more disabled children in the future. The first step to reach accomplishment is to have people that believe in these children. In America, the support system from the government and the families allows the children to grow steadily at their own pace. They are provided with the materials to learn, the tools to teach them, and the teachers who care for their education. However, in Bali, not everyone understands special needs so the support from the government and locals is slim.

It can definitely be argued that America's schooling system is better than Indonesia's, but when it comes down to special education, the schools that are the best are ones with the teachers, the students, and the parents who are eager to learn and put forth the efforts needed to give their child the right instruction. From the interviews that were done, the following is a list of things necessary for a healthy learning environment for special education: enough space and quiet to focus, motivated teachers, aware parents, small student to teacher ratio, attention to each individual learning disability/child, and faith in the children.

It was seen that even teachers who did not have experience with education or specifically special education were still able to teach and inspire children, as long as they stayed motivated and regimented. In America, awareness is widespread and special needs children are very accepted into society. This is the first step to getting better

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<sup>56</sup> Drazen, Brad. "Making The Grade." *NBC Connecticut*. N.p., 25 Apr. 2013. Web. 28 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Student-With-down-Syndrome-Named-to-National-Honor-Society-204675521.html>>.

education is making sure that society is educated. In Bali, however, people are either not educated, or, like the government, do not take the opportunity to educate them, therefore setting special education back.

After awareness sets in, families and teachers must have the will to both learn and teach. In the Walpole summer program for special needs, teachers make a constant effort to make sure the students are on track and doing their work. It is important that they focus and complete the work they are given each day to progress. It is proven from week to week that as they progress in the program, their attitudes and work ethic improve. However, the parents are not as involved in this program as they are in Sjaki-Tari-Us and the Youth Shine Academy, and parent awareness is almost as important as the education itself.

To be a head of a classroom in America, one must have the specific qualifications for the job, but being an assistant has less qualifications. In Bali, there are essentially no real qualifications for non-governmental organizations and just a little knowledge for government run schools. Having expertise in the special education department is very beneficial because those teachers are specifically trained to teach that subject and those kinds of kids. Separating children by level of ability is also very conducive to learning and if special education kids are getting the proper teaching, they must be learning at a pace that is appropriate for them, usually in small groups as well.

The schools that are funded by the government in Bali seem to give children less attention. The children also seem less motivated to work and fewer parents are involved. However, in the non-governmental organizations, parents are putting out the money themselves, and to make the most of their money, they seem to do whatever they can to

get their child the attention they need. The teachers also really do care for the special needs children and push themselves to be the best educators they can be. It is ironic that the organizations that the government ignores seem to be the ones that are actually helping the kids to persevere and learn.

In the government run school in Gianyar, it seemed that when the attention of the students was lost, so was the motivation to teach. This is not in all cases but some of the observation talked about supports that statement. It does not mean that the teachers do not care, but they must get themselves to keep working and setting an example for the students, otherwise the students will not learn what they should.

So who is to say that America's special education is better than Bali's or vice versa? From the interviews and observations, it definitely seems like the government run schools in America are superior in learning and teaching than that of Bali, however, the NGOs here make just as much an effort if not going beyond for their students. Both America and Bali have a long ways to go, but spreading awareness and the fact that having special needs kids is not shameful but a gift is a big start.

I will conclude this paper with my personal opinion of proper special education teaching etiquette; in order to make any progress with students who learn differently from the norm, educators and families need to support their child and have FAITH that that special being can do anything that they set their heart on. If we believe that a child is limited and cannot do something, it can only hold them back. We have to maintain a strong outlook and believe that special needs and mentally handicapped people can achieve their goals and with the right education.

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### **Qualitative Interview Questions**

FOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?

3. Where are you from?
4. What is your highest degree of education?
5. What was your focus of study in school?
6. What do you think are Balinese people's thoughts on special education and mentally challenged beings? Why?
7. When did this school start running?
8. When did you start working here?
9. What is your particular job at this school?
10. How did you find out about this school?
11. Why did you start working here?
12. How many hours a day do you work?
13. What subjects do you teach?
14. How many classrooms do you teach in?
15. Why are some teachers in uniform and others not?
16. Why do special needs children have to attend special schools instead of being integrated into regular schools?
17. What qualifications do children need to be considered for this school?
18. How much money does the government give this school each year?
19. What does that money go towards?
20. How much money does the government give to public schools?
21. How many children attended this school when it began?
22. How many children attend this school now?
23. How many boys go to this school?

24. How many girls go to this school?
25. How old are the children at the school?
26. How many children live at this school?
27. How much do children pay to go to this school?
28. How much do children pay to live at this school?
29. How often do children see their families?
30. How often do children go home?
31. How many years do children attend this school?
32. What are the types of disabilities that this school deals with?
33. What kinds of mental disabilities do the kids have in grades 3 and 4?
34. What subjects are taught to the children?
35. How many teachers work here?
36. How many volunteers work here?
37. What are the credentials that the staff needs to work here?
38. Do you think the staff works here for the kids or for the money?
39. Do the parents of the children play an active part in their children's lives while they are at this school?
40. Are the parents involved in their child's schooling?
41. What kinds of jobs do these children get after their schooling?
42. Are these kids able to live on their own after completion of their schooling?
43. Where do you get your funds from for this school?
44. Do you accept donations?
45. Please describe a typical day in your classroom.

46. What is the schedule like for elementary school children, middle school children, and high school children?

47. What is the after school schedule like?

#### FOR THE CHILDREN

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. What grade are you in?
5. What is your favorite subject and why?
6. Do you enjoy coming to school here?
7. Do you live at this school?
8. How many siblings do you have?
9. Do your siblings go to this school?
10. What school do they go to?

#### FOR THE PARENTS

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. What is your highest degree of education?
5. What was your focus of study in school?
6. Do you have a son or daughter at this school?
7. How old is your son/daughter?
8. What kind of handicap does your son/daughter have?

9. Why did you decide to have your child attend this school?
10. What do you think this school teaches your child for after graduation?
11. What do you think are Balinese people's thoughts on special education and mentally challenged beings? Why?
12. How do you feel about having a mentally/physically disabled child?

#### FOR PEOPLE ON THEIR OPINIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. What is your highest degree of education?
5. What was your focus of study in school?
6. What is your opinion of special education and mentally challenged beings?
7. What do you think are Balinese people's thoughts on special education and mentally challenged beings? Why?
8. Do you know any people with mentally challenged children?
  - a. What have people said about their child?

#### **Suggestions for Further Study**

SLB Sekolah Luar Biasa Ngeri Gianyar  
Jl. Erlangga Gianyar, Telp: (0361) 941 641

Sjaki-Tari-Us  
Jl. Monkey Forest Road, Ubud  
Telp: 0813-5718-1122

Youth Shine Academy  
Jl. Tukad Batu Agung No.4  
Tukad Pakerisan, Renon  
Telp: 0361 7409436