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Utilizing TikTok as a means of self-actualization for students at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the form of self-actualization of students at SLB N 1 Sleman in creating content on the TikTok account @slbn1sleman. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using Gerald Millerson's media production theory and Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach. The results show that student actualization occurs in three stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. The pre-production stage includes planning content ideas from daily activities, production involves students, actors, and teacher guidance, and post-production includes simple editing and evaluation. The content functions as an educational medium that can change public perceptions of children with special needs. A supportive school environment is a major factor. This study is expected to serve as a reference for other special needs schools in using social media for student education and empowerment.

Keywords: content creation; SLB N 1 Sleman; children with special needs; TikTok; self-actualization

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

Special Schools (SLB) are educational institutions that are specially designed to accommodate children with certain needs and capabilities. Based on the [UNICEF report \(2023\)](#), the number of children with disabilities in Indonesia is estimated to range between 425,000 to almost two million children. The data confirm that a child in need of special (ABK) requires serious attention, including in matters of providing inclusive and adequate education.

However, at the moment, SLB in Indonesia is still facing various challenges, such as limited accessibility, a lack of equal opportunities, and low public awareness of the importance of education for children with special needs. Negative stigma to disabilities is also still strong. [Riany et al. \(2016\)](#) explain that stigma is often rooted in a belief culture that views disability as a form of karma or God's trial due to parental behavior.

[Mustaqim \(2024\)](#) highlights that students with special needs often accept discriminatory treatment, including bullying, which has the potential to hinder their participation and have a negative impact on children's mental health. In line with that, [Nursholichah et al. \(2024\)](#) stated that labeling negatively, like “stupid child”, or “family burden” appears to have consequences a low sympathy social as well as a lack of public understanding of disabled child condition. There are still many individuals who do not know how to behave appropriately towards children with special needs and their parents. In fact, some parents of children in special needs still feel embarrassed about bringing their child to socialize or utilise health and education services ([Andriani et al., 2024](#)).

In Sleman, Yogyakarta, the number of children with special needs is classified as high (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024). This shows the size needed will service education, special capable facilitate children in need specifically to be able to get an education worthy, develop independence, as well as increase power competitiveness ([Nasution et al., 2022](#)).

One of the schools that shows commitment to providing inclusive service education is SLB Negeri 1 Sleman. This school makes an effort to create an environment supportive of learning and development of students in academic, skills, social, and creativity aspects through various activities, including the utilization of social media. Unfortunately, the practice education in SLB Negeri 1 Sleman still has minimal exposure in the public classroom, so that society, including parents of children with special needs, often lacks understanding of potential owned students.

The use of digital media, especially short video platforms, is considered an effective strategy for increasing public awareness about education ([Liu & Potmesil, 2025](#)). In line with the matter in this regard, SLB Negeri 1 Sleman utilizes the TikTok platform as a medium for displaying students at a time to expand the range of information to society. [Ramdani et al. \(2021\)](#) explain that using TikTok as a learning medium can push activeness, creativity, and participation. Participants educate participants in the learning process through account @slbn1sleman, school. This makes an effort to display potential and active students through creative content that is not only informative, but also educational, with the objective of reducing negative stereotypes about children in need of special. Although thus, research that examines in a way special production process of media content in SLB Negeri 1 Sleman, including planning, implementation, publication, and the teacher's role and involvement of students in video making, is still limited.

Therefore, this research aims to examine actualization and involvement of children in need of special in the production process of TikTok content @slbn1sleman, with emphasis on dynamic collaboration between teachers and students in creating visual messages that represent potential and independence of students. This expectation can give a new outlook about empowering students in special needs through social media, at the same time, become a reference for institutions in education, specifically in optimizing TikTok as an educational medium. In addition, the results of the study expected to enrich communication literature related to reducing disability stigma through digital platforms.

This study uses media production theory proposed by Gerald Millerson, who explains four main stages in the production process, namely pre-production, production, post-production, and transmission and evaluation. This model is used to analyze the creative work channel behind content produced by SLB

Negeri 1 Sleman, as well as to understand how every stage contributes to the formation narrative inclusive in social media.

1.1. Theory Production Gerald Millerson

Production theory by Gerald Millerson was initially developed to explain process production in media television. This theory emphasizes technical and creative steps that must be passed in order to produce a broadcast. However, along development of digital technology and media, this theory is also widely implemented in various fields of media production, including online media, social media, and video-digital based. In his book, Millerson divides the production process become four main stages, namely among others: First, Pre-Production. Pre-production stage covers all over form preparation before the retrieval process picture started. This is the key to being foundation's main success in production. When the planning is done, the more the production process is also smooth next. Millerson emphasized that pre-production started with a production planning meeting that included the determination program concept, objectives, and the desired target achieved.

In a general way, pre-production stage consists of on a number of main components as following: (a) Development. At the development stage, the process begins with formulation of program ideas. This activity includes: analyzing the audience, researching the program idea, research conducted to theme, deciding on the production mode, preparing the budget; (b) Determining the Target Audience. Television programs or digital media cannot target all circles at the same time. Therefore, from the beginning it is needed to determine the segment audience based on type, gender, age, and socioeconomic status. In the context of the study, this is what users of the TikTok platform, the target audience, need to consider characteristics of users of the platform, who are generally dominated by groups of teenagers until they mature, with a preference for short, dynamic, and interactive visual content; (c) Development Treatment. This stage covers formulation of ideas, continued research, outline story writing (outline), synopsis arrangement, treatment writing (development story detailed), script initial writing, as well as the review process for the script; (d) Develop Characters. Involving the selection process cast or appropriate talent with designed characters in scenario; (e) Develop Scene. Set design about the sequence and characteristics of every scene in production; (f) Develop Script Outlines. A script which only contains outlines and instructions technical for the crew, or a full script, which includes all visual and narrative aspects, including dialogue, set design, movement camera, and transition; (g) Commissioning. This stage is an approval process production, which begins with the compilation final budget, proposal presentation, casting process, and planning set design.

The second stage is production that is implemented after the entire pre-production process has finished and has been agreed upon by all parties involved. In terms of the general stage, this consists of three sub-stages: (a) Rehearsal. Rehearsal or exercise begins to ensure the over crew and talent understand roles, plot, and the need for technical production. This exercise covers direction director, reading script, as well as blocking positions, players, and cameras. For live production, rehearsal ideally is done at least 15 hours before broadcast; (b) Rehearsal Studio. This practice is done after all technical finished. This process includes dry runs (exercise) without costumes, walk-through (practice movement), camera blocking, pre-dress and dress rehearsal, to video taping as material evaluation; (c) Recording. The recording stage is the implementation of taking a picture or recording. All crew and talent run roles in accordance results exercise with the objective to produce a ready recording enter to stage editing.

Third, post-production. Post-production is the stage after the retrieval process picture is finished. This phase functions for compiling, editing, and perfecting all results production until the final program is ready to be aired. Post-production stages include: capturing, logging, editing pictures, and final cut.

The final stage is sransmission and Evaluation. This activity includes: marketing, traffic, trails, and transmission.

2. METHOD

This study combines a descriptive case study methodology with a qualitative approach. This strategy was adopted in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how SLB Negeri 1 Sleman students participate in the creation of TikTok content on the @slbn1sleman account, encompassing all phases of production from pre-production to post-production. By taking into account social dynamics, the subjects' firsthand experiences, and the interactions between actors that take place during the production process, the case study technique enables researchers to investigate phenomena contextually in real-world settings.

Three primary participants made up the research subjects: two pupils with modest intellectual disabilities, Lio and Ilham, and a guidance instructor, Asti. The two students played the lead roles or talents in the TikTok videos that were created, with the acting teacher as a facilitator and content development guide. Purposively, the research subjects were chosen because their participation was thought to be most pertinent to the study's main objective.

The process of student self-actualization through TikTok content creation, including the role of teachers in assisting students, the pre-production, production, and post-production stages of the production process, and the challenges that come up along the way, are all included in the study object. SLB Negeri 1 Sleman, situated at Jalan Kaliurang KM 17.5, Pakem, Sleman, Yogyakarta, is where this study was carried out. The study was carried out in April 2025. Techniques for gathering data are done in three ways. The guiding instructor and two students were first interviewed in-depth to learn more about their perspectives, experiences, and the significance of their participation in the content creation process. Second, the researcher was able to comprehend the social and environmental background of the creative process by directly seeing production activities without being involved through the use of non-participant observation. Third, documentation, which includes pertinent field notes, production activity images, and TikTok video archives. Three stages of the interactive Miles and Huberman model were used to analyze the data. The first step is data reduction, which entails selecting and classifying pertinent information from the findings of observations, interviews, and documentation.

The second step is data presentation, which entails arranging the results into narratives and diagrams that describe the relationships between the various components of the production process. The third step is formulating conclusions, which entails analyzing the research results in light of Alfred Schutz's phenomenology and Gerald Millerson's media production theory in order to comprehend the social and symbolic significance of the students' creative process. Source triangulation was used to compare the findings from observations, interviews, and documentation in order to assess the data's validity. To make sure the researcher's interpretation matched the reality in the field, a member check was also carried out with the guiding teachers.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Social Environment as a Supporting Factor for Production

At SLB Negeri 1 Sleman, the welcoming and encouraging social environment fosters the growth of students' creativity in TikTok content creation. A helpful and upbeat school culture is produced by cordial relationships between students, instructors, and staff. The seamless operation of production activities involving children with special needs is greatly aided by this condition.

This is consistent with Gerald Millerson's theory of production, which highlights that human interactions, the work environment, and non-technical assistance from the surrounding environment are all important factors in a successful production. According to [Millerson and Owens \(2009\)](#), the quality of production outcomes is significantly influenced by social and environmental support as well as teamwork.

These conclusions are supported by Alfred Schutz's phenomenological method. Student-teacher social connection is a meaningful activity that creates a shared social reality rather than just being a daily occurrence. Schutz emphasizes the value of intersubjectivity, or the exchange of meaning via common experiences. In this regard, the establishment of a supportive and significant social environment is just as

important to the success of TikTok content production at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman as technical proficiency (Hidayat & Nurmawati, 2023).

As a result, encouraging learning environments in schools are essential for boosting students' self-esteem and encouraging them to actively participate in content creation. In addition to being a video-making exercise, the production activity serves as a social learning tool that encourages teamwork and self-expression because of the moral support, empathy, and cordial contact between teachers and students.

3.2. TikTok Content Management @slbn1sleman

In August 2023, the @slbn1sleman TikTok account went live with the main goals of promoting the school to the general public and reducing the stigma associated with special needs children, especially among Generation Z. The school's IT staff and supervisory teachers work together to administer accounts, and the material kinds are divided into three main categories: instructional, creative, and events. TikTok was selected as the main media due to its capacity to communicate in an aesthetically pleasing and easily accessible manner, as well as its efficacy in reaching a large audience. Teachers make sure that every production activity takes into account students' voluntary participation, privacy concerns, and ethical considerations.

According to Millerson and Owens (2009), the Production Team principle—which states that effective coordination and a distinct role division are essential for success—is applied in this work pattern. While the students actively participate as both talent and producers, expressing their originality in every piece of material, the leading teacher serves as a facilitator of ideas and production processes.

According to Schutz's phenomenological viewpoint, students' participation in the creation of TikTok content is both a technical endeavor and a significant social interaction. Students, teachers, and the school environment use their everyday knowledge to jointly construct understanding during the production process, which turns into a space for symbolic interaction. As a result, in addition to creating digital material, production activities improve social bonds, boost self-esteem, and expand the definition of education in the classroom.

3.3. TikTok Content Creation Process

Millerson's classification of educational, entertaining, and inspiring is functionally similar to the three primary categories into which SLB Negeri 1 Sleman's TikTok content development process is separated: events, creative, and educational (Millerson & Owens, 2009). The production of TikTok content by @slbn1sleman is still heavily reliant on teachers' availability, which leads to frequently impromptu and unplanned uploads. This circumstance supports Millerson & Owens' (2009) assertion in the daily routine that a hectic schedule frequently pushes artists to forego completely original ideas in favor of workable alternatives.

Because of the school's heavy workload, posts that went viral have also stopped being consistent. According to Schutz's phenomenological viewpoint, content creation becomes a secondary activity in relation to the teacher's primary duty to instruct, and production carried out during free time can be understood as a natural social experience. See Table 1

Table 1. Content Description at SLBN 1 Sleman

No.	Content	Description
1.	Events content	This event typically features generic documentation, including excerpts of school activities, agendas, or events. Edited for upload to the TikTok platform.
2.	Creativity content	Content originality adheres to prevalent TikTok trends, including videos featuring distinctive settings or viral visual aesthetics (e.g., bus scenes with flashing lights or POV content), typically involving discussions and rehearsals to enhance the likelihood of appearing on the For You Page (FYP).
3.	Educational	Educational content is deliberately crafted, particularly for PPDB (New Student

	content	Admission) promotion, wherein the IT team assesses the school's challenges and opportunities, thereafter presenting this information in an engaging manner to enhance public awareness and interest.
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3.4. Pre-production of innovative TikTok content for the @slbn1sleman account

Pre-production stage covers analysis audience, research idea, selection of property, arrangement script, method of production, talent selection, planning costs, as well as determination of location and setting. Main audience in TikTok come from generation Z, so the content is designed with an informative, light, and emotional style in accordance with the motivation they have in media social (Ng & Lee, 2024).

Content ideas usually appear through discussion, flexible between teachers and students, raising personal experience as well as For Your Page (FYP) trends. This is in line with the concept of researching the program idea (Millerson & Owens, 2009). Within the framework of Schutz's phenomenology, the idea reflects the transformational experience of feeling inferior pride that wants to be shared through social media.

Properties used are simple, like a trophy, a bag, a flag, or soap to wash hands, which function as symbols easily understood audience. This is in accordance with the idea of illusion of reality (Millerson & Owens, 2009). For students, the property has its own meaning, symbolic alone — for example, a trophy that represents achievements, while a flag signifies nationalism.

Script made in semi-script form, only includes an outline for students to own room improvise, as develop script outlines stage (Millerson & Owens, 2009). The tapping method is more often chosen because flexible, allowing repetition, and adjustment with abilities. For Schutz, the method becomes “space safe,” which allows students to express self in a way experienced in their lifeworld.

Talent selection is carried out in a way inclusive of involving students with various types of disabilities, including mentally disability, weight, and down syndrome. Although it needs more intensive directions, this strategy reflects character development stages according to Millerson. From Schutz's perspective, this meaningful involvement as an effort to build understanding together (intersubjectivity), so that students not only play a role as visual objects, but as actors social context that has meaning for teachers, students, others, and society.

The entire production process was done without cost special costs, only utilising the internet quota and facilities available at school. The stage of preparing the budget (Millerson & Owens, 2009) is not done formally, because of the nature and simple nature. In Schutz's view, simplicity precisely shows solidarity and collective spirit between teachers and students.

Production location is generally located in the school area and its surroundings, such as a field or room classroom, with simple property use. In the content “school outfit”, for example, the use of a blue cloth backdrop, chairs, tables, poles, and flags, red and white, reflects simple visual planning, however meaningful. This is in line with the commissioning stage (Millerson & Owens, 2009), where elements of background and symbols of nationality are used to strengthen the identity of students. For Schutz, the setting reflects subjective and symbolic meaning that builds a sense of existence as well as equality.

In a way, overall, pre-production at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman has covered aspect main aspects of Millerson, though a number of elements, such as developing scenes, presenting the proposal, and casting done formally. This shows that the pre-production process at SLB is underway, simple, participatory, and emphasizes planning together between teachers and students. Thus, the message of humanity and inclusivity has been designed from stage beginning.

3.5. Producing Creative Content for TikTok @slbn1sleman

Production stage started with a simple rehearsal that included an explanation concept, selection of costumes, and the use tool production tools like a camera or a handheld telephone. Although without a dedicated studio or rehearsal clean formal, there are planning ideas, expressions, and blocking directly on location. The supervising teacher, Asti, plays a role in direct expression and movement of students; meanwhile, students train with enthusiasm, even try other roles such as cameraman.

Memorization problems or pronunciation are often overcome with retake; however, students are still enthusiastic and blessed with support from teachers and colleagues. The shooting process was carried out in a flexible way in accordance with timetable learning, with simple equipment and a duration customized to TikTok sound or template.

This tapping method is in line with the concept of deciding on the production mode (Millerson & Owens, 2009), which emphasizes the importance of production format adaptation in accordance with the subject. From Schutz's perspective, tapping becomes a safe room for students to express self in their daily life (lifeworld). Support social support provided by teachers and friends strengthens trust self-students and creates meaningful intersubjective processes.

Different from Widia & Adikara's (2023) research, which highlights spontaneity production without practice, or Fithriyah & Anom (2024), who emphasize individual production, findings show that the production process at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman not only produces digital content, but also builds identity, trust in oneself, as well as strengthens social interaction between students.

3.6. Post-Production TikTok content @slbn1sleman

Post-production at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman was carried out in a simple adaptation of a technical school. Referring to Millerson & Owens, 2009, the stages of capturing, logging, editing pictures, and final cut remain executed, although in a practical way. The capturing process is carried out directly from a mobile phone, logging based on teacher observation, while editing uses the application CapCut for content fast and Adobe Premiere for content more complex.

The final cut stage focuses on visual synchronization and selecting relevant sounds, as well as free right creation, even though without an in-depth audio mixing process. The teacher has a dominant role in editing, while involved students are still limited to the role of a talent, except at the moment, certain events like race Eid al-Fitr 2025, when they participate in study takes, editing, and sound selection independently.

The main obstacle in this stage lies in the search for sound and problems with copyright permission. In Schutz's view, although student involvement is still limited, this process becomes a means of learning technical skills at a time room expressing creative that increases confidence self as well as their digital skills.

3.1.4 Evaluation of TikTok Creative Content @slbn1sleman

Based on an interview with Asti, the evaluation of TikTok content at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman has not yet been done in a comprehensive way, especially for frequent event content directly uploaded without quality control. Evaluation is usually carried out by the IT team or school media to ensure content is important, for example, inspecting error text, but technical aspects such as editing, subtitles, and lighting still often become weaknesses, even in viral content.

According to Millerson, evaluation ideally done before and after screenings through the bait come back audience as well as internal reflection. However, at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman, this process is still naturally spontaneous and not yet systematic. From the perspective of Schutz's phenomenology, teachers' sense of regret towards weak technical skills becomes an experience that enriches their stock of knowledge.

In addition, the involvement of students is still limited to the role of talent, whereas aspects of ideas, editing, and evaluation are dominated by teachers. This confirms the importance of expanding participation of students in need, specifically for the position they hold as subjects, creating the stronger, at the same time, increasing the quality of content.

4. CONCLUSION

This shows that manufacturing TikTok content at SLB Negeri 1 Sleman is functioning as a means of self-expression at a time, strengthening trust self for students in need through collaboration between teachers and students. The content produced not only increases a positive image school, but also fosters

support for the public to inclusivity education. However, there are limitations in aspect technical and evaluation processes that need to be repaired.

This success describes how students actualize self in the production process of content as well as identify factors, supporters, and obstacles. Therefore, it is recommended that SLB Negeri 1 Sleman develop a more comprehensive content strategy, planned and sustainable, expanding the involvement of active students in each stage of production, as well as increasing the quality of technical and systems evaluation. Thus, production content not only becomes a medium of expression, but also a space for learning and empowerment that strengthens identity as well as positions students in need, specifically in the digital realm.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

RPO contributed to conceptualization, methodology, interview analysis. MPA contributed to review, editing, translating

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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