

Current Practices of Inclusive Education

A Case Study in Indonesia

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Abstract: Increasing enrollment number of students with special needs in regular classroom required specific teaching skills of classroom teachers. Since 2001, Indonesia has been implementing an inclusive education that leads to urgent call for an in-depth investigation of some challenges and the need of support for teachers to provide adequate educational services for all learners including students with special needs. This paper reports a case study of inclusive practices in Yogyakarta, one of the cities in Indonesia which received a national award as an inclusive city in 2015. A forum Group Discussion (FGD), interview and observation were conducted in order to investigate the current practices and the need of support for teachers in inclusive schools. A variety of educational practices in inclusive schools in one city in Indonesia is found that relate to the need of support to improve collaborative work and teaching competencies in inclusive classrooms.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Government of Indonesia has signed a Resolution related to the human rights of persons with disabilities on 30 March 2007 in New York and continued with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Tuesday 18 October 2011. It is clearly stated in the convention that persons with disabilities have equal rights in various fields, one of which is education. Long before the ratification was signed, the policy on inclusive education has been specifically set in the National Education Minister's regulation no 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education for learners with special needs and gifted and talented. Furthermore, the number of inclusive schools continues to grow from 254 schools in 2008 to over 2000 schools in 2009. The numbers of inclusive schools are likely to increase as the municipalities, districts and provinces declare and commit supporting inclusive education. Based on this situation, it is very clear that teachers are required to handle all learners, including children with special needs. However, current practices of inclusive education after more than 10 years has been implemented is rarely being investigated. Some local and national newspapers reported the need for support to implement inclusive education. A local newspaper broadcasted the limited of educational sources and

teaching skills of the teachers in inclusive schools according to director of educational agency at South Sumatra (Fornews, 2017). The director of educational agency at Yogyakarta also stated that inclusive education as mandated by national regulation need more support (Tribun Jogja, 2016). Additionally, the need to provide support for teachers for better educational services for all learners is urgently required.

Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) stated that in order to improve the quality of inclusive schools, identification of common practices, the need of support, and evaluate teachers' efficacy are needed. Furthermore, investigation of the inclusive practices will gather not only valuable information about the need of specific training for teachers but also the excellent practices that need to be continued. Schwab et al. (2015) revealed that teachers reported the need of training for behavior management, while they already feel confidence to build teamwork (co-teaching) to support students with special needs because the positive atmosphere at schools already established. In Indonesia, less number of research has been conducted to investigate the current practices of inclusive education. Further studies of how the current practice in inclusive school will provide information about the need of support for practicing teachers. Additionally, this information also beneficial for educational institution to develop

training for teachers and teacher education program to prepare future teachers to be more capable of supporting inclusive education. Furthermore, this study focused on investigation of current practices and the need of support for teachers also discussed.

2 METHODOLOGY

The FGD was conducted by inviting representatives of teachers in Yogyakarta. In this FGD, there are two important points was discussed, namely, a) how teachers know the needs of each student? b) how teachers provide educational services for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms? School observation was conducted in order to observe how teachers handling children with special needs in their class. There were five schools were visited to represent 5 districts in Yogyakarta namely one elementary school in Gunung Kidul, one elementary school in Sleman, one elementary school in Kulon Progo, one elementary school in Kota Yogyakarta, and one elementary school in Bantul.

Descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the data from FGD and observation. Percentage of demographic data to represent the majority of disabling conditions serve in inclusive classrooms is provided. Along with this, a descriptive narrative about current practices and the need of support for teachers are presented.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nineteen teachers were attended FGD from twenty-five invited teachers. They represented 19 inclusive schools in Yogyakarta were joined in FGD in order to discuss their current practices and challenges in teaching in inclusive classrooms. The average of teaching experience of the participants is 2 years with the longest 13 years, and the shortest is one year.

In the classroom, the number of students with special needs approximately is two students, with the highest number is 4 students and the lowest number is zero students. The zero number is related to the limited access for conducting a comprehensive assessment for students who have academic problems. So, the teachers stated that they might have disabilities but unrecognized yet as students with special needs. The highest percentage of disabling conditions is students with mild academic problems according to teacher report.

According to interview data, students with mild academic problems include several disabling conditions: slow learner, intellectual disability, and low vision. Based on chart 1, some disabling conditions might overlap, for example, students with sensory problem might have an academic concern, and students with behavior problem might have academic difficulties and vice versa. A specific definition for each disabling conditions that enable school practitioners to conduct diagnosis and provide special education services is still missing in the national regulation no 70 of 2009. Furthermore, in this study reported disabling terminologies as five possible problems that can understand by teachers easily. However, this data might not represent the real number of students with special needs because of lack of diagnostic procedures and bias in teacher referral.

3.1 Current Practices in Inclusive Schools

3.1.1 Referral and Diagnostic Procedures

According to FGD and interview with some of the teachers, referral and diagnostic procedure are varied. One of the FGD participants stated that teachers recognize the existence of academic problems during the first year of schooling. Some information that leads to referral are a low academic achievement (below the class level), lack of concentration span during classroom instruction, and unable to respond appropriately, e.g., difficulties in reading and writing, and experience specific barrier of learning, e.g., unable to see the written text on the blackboard. Similarly, Dunn et al. (2009) revealed two common criteria for teacher referral: inattention (i.e., lack of concentration) and aptitude (poor reasoning skills, request assistance of directions).

The teacher then refers for further assessment in order to know the need of the student. The detailed assessment is conducted by the expert. Most of the expert is a psychologist in order to know the intelligence level. In this case, the teacher referral is based on students' academic performance which might be influenced by the quality of instruction instead of a possibility of students' disabling condition. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) stated that low achievement, especially for students with learning disability, reflects low quality of instruction. Teachers' sense of efficacy was found as a source of bias in teacher referral (Podell and Soodak, 1993). Podell and Soodak (1993) revealed that teachers with low efficacy tend to refer students from low-SES families for special education services. Furthermore,

the criteria of teacher referral require more specific guidance in order to reduce the bias.

Another school applies identification of students with special needs during the enrollment process. This is part of school policies while many other inclusive schools do not clearly mention it. They interview parents to know the characteristics of the students. This information will be accumulated with teacher observation during instruction to make a referral when it is necessary.

3.1.2 Referral and Diagnostic Procedures

Various educational services are provided for students with special needs in different quantity. Teachers reported frequent supports for students with special needs are direct feedback, peer tutor, and work group. The participants of FGD stated that they provide feedback daily. According to Mitchell (2014) feedback combined with formative assessment is one of the suggested teaching practices in inclusive classrooms. Feedback will inform the learners about their progress in learning. Additionally, peer tutor is conducted in some inclusive schools weekly. Even though many of the students in this study have academic difficulties, but all the teachers stated that they never adjust the learning materials to the needs of students. Educational services for students with special needs provided by teachers in different frequency can be seen in figure 1.

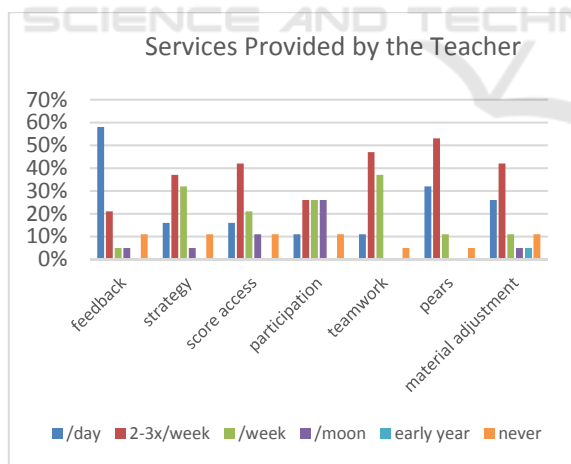


Figure 1: Educational services for students with special needs provided by teachers.

Based on the observation data, teachers give feedback individually when the students have misconceptions. The teachers gather this information from students' portfolio and students responds to teachers' questions which indicating incorrect answers. The teachers provide feedback by asking the

students to correct their answers and rewrite the correct answer. If the student is still having trouble, the teacher will explain some of the material that the students still finds difficult. In this situation, the teacher providing a space for students to locate their misconceptions before making some corrections. In line with this, Mitchell (2014) suggest considering immediate feedback for new tasks, corrective feedback instead of hints, and early support with structure.

When teacher asking questions verbally and the students provide an incorrect answer, the teachers provide feedback as soon as possible by asking a further explanation of the answer (i.e., why is your answer like that?). When the students quiet and looked confused to explain, then the teacher gives the space to ask friends. The last option for feedback is given some clues as keywords. Asking questions of students with learning difficulties might lead to embarrassing moment because they might not know the correct answer. For this reason, teachers need to adjust the level of complexity of the question (Mitchell, 2014) to improve the possibility of success. However, Mitchell (2014) suggest that teachers no need to avoid asking questions because there are a variety of sources for feedback (i.e., peers, books, written, computers).

In some schools, teacher providing a formative evaluation through verbal and written formats. In verbal questions, teachers stated that they ask other students as a model before they ask students with special needs. The reason for this is increasing the readiness of students with special needs. Written formative assessment for students with special needs is similar with other students. When the students with special needs have low academic performance compare to class goals, then teachers will reduce the level of difficulty and conduct remedial teaching. Some teachers conducted written evaluation by asking the students to do problem-solving in front of the classrooms. In this situation, teachers seemed to pay less attention to students with special needs to reduce harassment when the students cannot finish the problems. Other students invited to solve the problems and they received applause when the answer was correct.

Teachers provided a variety of instructional tools to ensure students with special needs comprehend the content. Based on observational data, one of the teachers conduct demonstration and provide a real media to explain about musical instruments for students with intellectual disability. Students' responses to specific instruction are different regarding their cognitive abilities. In line with this, a

study conducted by Cho et al. (2015) revealed that students with lower cognitive areas almost respond incapable compared to typical peers and adequate responders. Reading and math difficulties among students with mild disabilities are related to their lower cognitive abilities with different profiles. Lower working memory skills are found in students with intellectual disability who have more cognitive impairments compared to students with behavior disorders and students with learning disabilities (Peng and Fuchs, 2016). Furthermore, the more teacher's understanding of each disabling conditions, the better specific instruction they can provide to meet the needs of each student.

According to teacher's report and classroom observation, it seems that the implementation of formative assessment either verbally or written format for students with special needs at school is devoted to developing instruction adjustment. This is in line with the purpose of formative assessment to make instructional decisions based on student needs to ensure learning for all learners (Cornelius, 2013; Watkins, 2013). Some teachers stated that they provide adjustment in their expectation to evaluate student outcomes, for example, students with writing problems will be assessed based on their writing performance such as neatness instead of writing structures. The teachers stated that this evaluation would gradually improve as the students with special needs make progress in their writing. Furthermore, even though teachers implicitly stated the need for differentiated instruction, but most of the teachers reported that they rarely create individual instruction for students with special needs. The missing of differentiated instruction for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms requires further investigation. The reason for this is the previous study shows a positive impact of differentiated instruction on student academic achievement levels, student motivation, and teacher perception to meet the need of students with special needs (Watkins, 2013).

During classroom observations, teachers also employ cooperative learning by providing opportunities for students with special needs to work in a group and receive support from peers. Teachers distribute students with special needs into different groups. Small group instructions consist of six students, and one of the group members is students with special needs. Some teachers stated that sometimes they allow students with special needs select their group based on their preference, so they feel comfortable to work with friends. The teacher reported that they select the leader for each group to

lead the discussion based on students' performance. The teacher explained that most of the time, students with high academic performance would lead the group, but sometimes they choose students with special needs to lead the group. In order to increase the quality of work group, the teacher stated that they set up a rule before students start their collaborative group. Furthermore, when the group is finished, they are directed to support other groups. Not many information can be gathered from teachers about how they prepare the students for group works. The previous study revealed that students in elementary school tend to work individually, so they need support from teachers. Kutnick et al. (2008) revealed that relational strategy improves the student's performance on academic achievement, motivation to work with peers, group work, learning focus, and communication with partners. The relational strategy consists of sequential activities which start from building trust, improving communication skills through partnered discussion, and working to solve problems in a group (Kutnick et al. 2008).

Some teachers reported that they conduct peer tutors in their classrooms to facilitate learning of students with special needs. For those who do not implement this strategy stated that the number of students with special needs and the number of tutors is not proportional. The previous study revealed that peer tutor could improve reading skills of students with reading problems with several steps, such as training for tutor material preparation (Pujaningsih et al. 2016).

Instructional adaptation is rarely implemented according to teachers' statements during FGD even though in some classrooms observation they showed that they provide several adaptations in learning. One of the teachers asked students with special needs verbally because the student has difficulties in writing. Once the student answers the questions, then the teacher writes down on the paper, and the students imitate it. This situation shows that the teacher willing to support students with special needs even though they have limited training about inclusive education. As previously mentioned that some teachers also have a different expectation in regards to evaluating students with special needs, so the teacher acceptance is clearly seen during FGD. Based on the observation data, teachers provided prompts and hints for students with special needs to be socially accepted by using proper words for request help, apologies, and praise. Based on classroom observations, the teacher also did not hesitate to help students with special needs whenever they asked and

managed the class adequately. Some of the students with special needs are supported by teacher assistance

Limited specific educational services for students with special needs is provided in inclusive classrooms but requires more improvement. Some teachers already provide direct feedback, different teaching strategies, more opportunities to engage in classroom activities through various ways, and an adjustment in terms of the evaluation process. The reason for this situation might relate to the lack of information for classroom teachers to provide educational services for students with special needs. Furthermore, support for teachers to improve their instructional qualities in inclusive classrooms is urgently needed.

3.2 The Need for Support

3.2.1 Systemic Procedures for Referral and Diagnostic Process

Most of the inclusive schools in this study conduct classroom observations as a source of information for referral process. Some of the teachers stated that they had tried some of the different teaching strategies to support students who have academic difficulties after they found some students who have low academic achievement. They tried to support the students before they refer to experts for further diagnostic procedures. However, the selection of the teaching strategies almost never relies on evidence-based practice. Furthermore, the students' academic achievement might remain the same because the instructional strategy is not working. Most of the screening process relies on the teachers' initiative because there are no written guidelines about how to conduct it. In line with this, Kugelmass (2001) revealed one of the key components for successful inclusive implementation is teacher initiatives which supported by school principal as part of school commitment in order to build an inclusive community. With limited time and support from schools, this process can be overwhelming for classroom teachers. Working with parents in order to locate the students' problems is also stated by some teachers. Despite the importance of parental involvement in the implementation of inclusion (Filler and Xu, 2006), some inclusive schools do not include parents to develop educational services for students with special needs. Some teachers mentioned the reason for this is difficulties in collaborating with parents because the parents refuse if their children are labelled as students with special needs. One of the reason for parent's rejection to collaborate with the school is parents found that their children are doing

OK at home, so they feel that their children do not require extra services. This information might be either correct or false that need further assessment steps. The missing part that can be seen in the building collaboration with parents is communicating the student's data and hearing parent's concern in regards to students' learning. It is crucial to communicate the evidence of students' performance in order to seek a better support for them at school and home environment. When parents refused to share some information about their children, they might have some concern that needs to be heard. Mitchell (2014) stated that parents of students with special needs have extra demands on their children, feel shame and need support to deal with their emotional distress. The empathic approach to the family situation and listening to parents' voices and acknowledging the unique needs and hopes expectations to their children can be one of the first steps to collaborate with them (Pérez et al., 2005). The school might also provide a systematic procedure to build communication with parents so sharing detailed information about students will not only required for parents of suspected students with special needs.

The missing of systematic ways of providing educational services for students with special needs lead to some delayed intervention for students with special needs. One teacher stated that the school determined that one of the students has intellectual disability in 2nd grade. The option to refer the student to a special school was refused by the parents because of financial issue. One systematic way of providing educational services that already implement worldwide is Response to Intervention (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006) to monitor at-risk students and providing support in three different tiers might need to be considered because the teacher can focus on specific needs of the students based on their learning achievement and provide different strategies, then monitor students learning progress continuously. However, the educational services for students with special needs require adequate teaching skills and collaborative skills among teachers.

3.2.2 Adequate Sources to Ensure Better Educational Qualities for All Learners

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Many schools during FGD stated that the availability of support from special education teachers is limited because they have one day scheduled for a week to serve students with special needs. On the other hand,

teachers report that students with special needs require support from special education teachers more. This situation burden classroom teacher because they felt that they are not adequately prepared to deal with students with special needs daily while they have to ensure learning for all students in their class. Some of the teachers stated that they conduct peer tutor strategy to assist students with special needs while they focus on the rest of the class.

In this situation, teachers work alone to serve students in their classroom including students with special needs with limited support and limited teaching skills. Improving teacher competencies through workshops might be not the answer in this situation as Indonesia government has been providing them since 2001 all over the country. Learning from other countries that already implement the same strategy might lead to a solution for this problem. Vaughn and Schumm, (1995) tried to understand the situation in educational practice in the U.S. in the early 90s about the teachers' hindrance providing accommodations for students with special needs. They found that teachers at that time did not get enough support while it was time-consuming and difficult to implement different accommodations for each student with special needs. In Israel, a similar situation was found when regular teachers burn out because they did not get enough support from the organizational system at schools when they have problems dealing with students with special needs in their class (Talmor et al., 2005). At this point, the need for collaborative work as school routines can establish through pre and in-service training for teachers is suggested by Sugai and Horner (2009), which focuses on not only how teachers support a student with special needs, but also the whole class to learn together (Vaughn and Schumm, 1995). Working as a team in order to obtain the fullest of learning achievement for all learners including students with special needs require some specific skills that need to develop in training programs. Lack of performance in those skills might reduce the quality of team work and affect the quality of educational programs.

3.2.2.2 Teaching competencies improvement for inclusive classroom

As inclusive education is defined as providing a better educational program to meet the needs of all students, then the curriculum adjustment is a must. However, teachers stated that they need to know more about teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms. They reported that their current teaching practices are inadequate to meet the needs of students with special

needs, specifically dealing with students with behavior problems, motivating low-interest children to do the work, and explain behavior expectation in the classroom. Teachers stated some teaching competencies that urgently need to be improved are: 1) behavior management, 2) classroom management, and 3) alternative learning strategies. Based on teachers' statement, it can be seen that they have the willingness to provide educational services for students with special needs and they feel that they need to improve their teaching competencies handle inclusive classrooms.

The need of support to improve teachers' collaborative and teaching skills in inclusive classrooms is clearly stated based on FGD and interview in this study. Some of them already receive some workshops about this skill and need full support from school administrator to implement the skills and transfer to other class as well. Building community of learning at school can facilitate the learning process among teachers and provide support when the sources still limited

4 CONCLUSIONS

Current practices in inclusive schools in one city in Indonesia are varied because there is clear guideline or procedures to provide educational services for students with special needs. However, providing direct feedback for students with special needs is the most current practice in inclusive schools in one city in Indonesia. Along with this, teachers already have initiatives to provide adaptation in the learning process and refer at-risk students to expert. Some schools already collaborate with parents, but most of the teachers in this study reported the need to improve parental involvement. The missing of school structure to provide support for teachers to deal with students with special needs lead to delayed intervention and minimum instructional adjustment. This situation relates to the need of support to build collaborative work among teachers and improve teachers' competencies in inclusive classrooms.

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