

The Sekolah Ramah Inklusi (SERASI) Training Program's Effectiveness in Improving the Attitude of Primary Teachers to Inclusive Education

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Abstract-- This quasi-experimental study aimed to examine the efficacy of the Sekolah Ramah Inklusi (SERASI) training program in improving the attitudes of teachers towards to inclusive education. The SERASI training program was developed for primary teachers in inclusive schools (n=19). This intervention comprised an 8 hours face-to-face training session encompassing three topics: disability, inclusive education, and teaching strategies. In order to determine the effects of the SERASI training program, the attitudes of teachers were measured using Kurniawati's (2016) adaptation of Mahat's (2008) Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) and through observation and interviews with open-ended questions. All measurement tools were administered twice: before the training program was conducted and immediately afterwards. The outcomes obtained from the MATIES revealed no significant differences in the attitudes of teachers with regard to inclusive education although the mean scores of the pre-test (M=4.58) and the post-test (M=4.73) of the MATIES were different. In addition, the teachers felt that the SERASI training program accorded them the opportunity to better understand inclusive education and the strategies that they could apply in their classes, and that the training made them feel more confident of teaching an inclusive class. The results of the investigation thus demonstrated that the SERASI training program influences teachers in a positive manner. However, the SERASI training program was not found to be significantly effective in improving the attitudes of the teachers. These findings suggest that teachers in inclusive schools should receive a long-term training program and that they must be observed and interviewed to clearly comprehend the prevailing attitudes. Also, future researchers or schools should consider external factors such as the number of students with special education needs (SEN) or the facilities offered by the school to support inclusive education.

Keywords: attitude, special educational needs, primary school, teacher training program, inclusive education.

Introduction

Inclusive education is one of the ways in which the UN Convention Rights of Persons with a disability and the Indonesian Education Law can be implemented. 18% of 1.6 million students with special education needs (SEN) already receive their education in inclusive schools (Kemdikbud, 2017). Inclusive schools accord students with SEN the opportunity to be educated with regular students in the same class (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Permendiknas 70/2009). The Indonesian government is currently still trying to increase the number of inclusive schools and to build physical facilities for people with disabilities. Following Indonesia's inclusive policies, several studies have concluded that inclusive schools can benefit students (Capodlecl et al., 2016; De Boer et al., 2014; Doll et al., 2003; Hurst et al., 2012; Wauters and Knoors, 2008).

A good relationship with regular students made students with SEN more confident, brave, and open (Wauters and Knoors, 2008). Peer relationships motivate students with SEN to learn to be part of a group, to improve their communication skills, to negotiate, and to resolve their own

problems (Capodile et al., 2016; De Boer et al., 2014; Doll et al., 2003; Hurst et al., 2012; Wauters and Knoors, 2008). On the other hand, inclusive schools also positively affect regular students by improving their social development (Greene, 2017). Students with SEN who are enrolled in an inclusive school obtain benefits similar to those gained from therapy (Koster et al., 2010). However, research has evinced that some students with SEN often face some difficulties in being accepted by their classmates (Koster et al., 2010). Students with SEN usually demonstrate lower social participation in class than regular students (Avramidis, 2010), and are found to have fewer friends than their peers in the general category.

Numerous researchers have revealed that teachers play a significant role in making students with SEN accepted by regular students (Garrote & Dessemontet, 2015; Lequia, 2015). The teachers in the primary school are pivotal to the way students treat each other in classrooms, especially in an inclusive environment (Avramidis, 2010). Teachers can also manage classroom interactions and try to help their students develop social roles within the class (Kiuuru et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the attitudes of teachers are also crucial for the academic performance of students with SEN. Competent teachers are able to create effective learning environments (Widiningtys, 2012). Teachers in inclusive classrooms must be competent and able to effectively explain lessons to students with SEN and to regular students. They must develop learning goals taking into consideration the development of all their students, including the kind of extraordinary assistance required by students with SEN (Greene, 2017). The teachers are also responsible for building good relationships with other teachers who handle students with SEN and to create individual educational plans for their special needs students. Thus, teachers of inclusive classes must take on more responsibilities than teachers who handle regular classrooms.

The attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education affect their attempts to enhance the learning process in their inclusive classrooms (Hoffman, 2006; Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015). Teachers who feel positively consider their pedagogical methods, make strategies, set personalized expectations for the academic performance of students with SEN, and provide additional support to students with SEN (Greene, 2017). Further, the attitudes of teachers to the students with SEN in the class influences peer group reactions to such students and affects peer acceptance as well as the academic performance of students with SEN (Kiuuru et al., 2015; Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015; Triandis, 1971). Hence, the attitudes of teachers with regard to inclusive education are also manifested in the effectiveness of teaching practices in inclusive classrooms.

For the purposes of this study, attitude comprises three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral intention (Triandis, 1971). Cognitive refers to an individual's beliefs about the object. The affective component pertains to the subject's feelings about the object, and the behavioral element indicates a person's predisposition to act towards the object in a particular manner. Teachers who have a positive attitude to inclusive education will accept their students without distinguishing whether the student is regular or has special needs (Delgado, 2011). Such

teachers will also try to prepare instruction material in ways that conform to the requirements of the inclusive classroom (Greene, 2017).

Endeavors such as Sadioglu, Bilgin, Batu, and Oksal's study (Greene, 2017), Kurniawati's investigation (2012), and Srivastava's inquiry (2005) have evinced different result with regard to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Kurniawati's research demonstrated that teachers in Indonesia already held a positive attitude to inclusive education (Kurniawati et al., 2012), while the majority of studies conducted on this subject in Indonesia, including Muzdalifah and Billah's investigation (Muzdalifah & Billah, 2017), reported negative attitudes. This unconstructive outlook to inclusive education is usually exhibited by the behavior of the teachers in classrooms. Teachers who do not like inclusive classrooms usually pay little or no attention to students with SEN as long as such learners do not display any disturbing behavior. The teachers are also concerned about the competence of students with SEN to fulfill academic expectations (Greene, 2017). According to Avcoglu (2017), teachers in inclusive schools usually given instructions, assignments, and manage their classrooms without considering students with SEN.

The negative attitudes of teachers to inclusive education is influenced by their lack of knowledge about inclusive education (Avcoglu, 2017; Kantavong et al., 2017), and their deficiencies with regard to teaching strategies appropriate for inclusive classrooms (Kuyini & Desai, 2007). A teacher's awareness about inclusive classrooms is relevant (De Boer et al., 2014; Avcoglu, 2017; Kantavong et al., 2017), to the variety of special needs of their students (Delgado, 2011; Elisa & Wrastari, 2013; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014) and to their expectations with regard to the academic performance of their students (Greene, 2017; Hoffman, 2006; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014).

The results of interviews conducted in February and March 2018 with some teachers of an inclusive school in Jakarta revealed that when the inclusive school accepted students with SEN, the teachers knew very little about the kind of students with SEN they would get in their classrooms and how they should manage such students in inclusive classrooms. Consequently, the teachers of this inclusive school usually treat students with SEN in the same manner as regular students without considering their SEN when they provide instructions, hand out worksheets, or set the seating arrangements. The teachers also revealed that they depended on their teaching experience in regular classrooms to handle their inclusive classrooms.

Attitude may be formed through direct experience or indirect experience. The teachers who were interviewed claimed that they depended largely on their direct experiences (Greene, 2017). They tried to understand inclusive education better based solely on their own experiences but the lack of any formal training was worrying and it made them feel less confident (Greene, 2017). The teachers were also not sure about the effectiveness of the teaching strategies they were using in their classes. They lacked knowledge of special education and were not certain about their roles and responsibilities in an inclusive classroom (Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015).

Training is one way to improve the attitudes of teachers with regard to inclusive education. It has been asserted before that attitude can be formed by indirect experiences, and a training

program is one such indirect exposure to special needs education. Several researchers have revealed that the attitudes and knowledge of teachers with regard to inclusive education are influenced by the training they were imparted (De Boer et al., 2003; Doll et al., 2003; Greene, 2017; Kurniawati et al., 2012; Lequia, 2015; Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014;). However, teachers in Indonesia are rarely offered opportunities for training or other similar programs that help them know more about students with SEN or inclusive classrooms (Kurniawati et al., 2012). In Indonesia, training programs on inclusive education or students with SEN are only meant for teachers of special needs schools or to teachers who only handle students with SEN (Kurniawati et al., 2012). Thus, teachers in inclusive schools cannot avail of training programs in inclusive education.

In fact, a preliminary study on inclusive schools revealed that teachers became less confident after undergoing a training program (Kurniawati et al., 2012). However, that particular study evinced some limitations. Kurniawati et al. (2016) and Srivastava et al. (2015), found, on the contrary, that teachers who participated in a training program became more knowledgeable about students with SEN and about inclusive schooling. These studies found that the cognitive-affective components of the attitudes of such teachers also improved significantly. However, no extant research initiative has yet examined the effects of training programs in the long term. Meanwhile, Srivastava et al. (2017) suggest that future research should use convenience sampling method such as deputation of teachers by their principals. In Srivastava's research, participants were voluntarily engaged and this willingness might have influenced the results as they were already motivated to change and to gain knowledge.

In any case, previous research has demonstrated that teachers who are given the responsibility to effectively manage inclusive classrooms do not have the knowledge or skills to support them in this task. To help improve the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education, this study attempts to address the gap between knowledge and task and examines the effectiveness of the SERASI training program for teachers. The hypothesis for this study is: The SERASI training program will effectively improve the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education.

The proposed training intervention is aimed at improving the attitudes of teachers. The authors of this paper designed a SERASI training program based on the results of previous studies. In particular, the results of Kurniawan's 2016 study and also the results of the need analysis conducted by Srivastava in the same year were consulted. Before designing the SERASI training program, the authors conducted their own need analysis through observation and interviews to gauge the attitudes of the teachers as they conducted their daily activities and to ascertain the requirements of the teachers with regard to inclusive education. The SERASI training program comprised three topics: inclusive education, special needs, and teaching strategies.

The training program accorded teachers of inclusive schools the opportunity to receive specialized training on inclusive education and special needs training strategies. The effects of the SERASI training program on the attitudes of the teachers were measured using the Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) adapted from Marian Mahat's original version (2008) and developed by Farida Kurniawati (2016). This

instrument has been proved to be reliable. The adapted MATIES was applied twice: before and immediately after the training program was conducted. The research question asked: “Is the SERASI training program effective in increasing positive attitudes in teachers with regard to inclusive education?”

Method

Design and Procedure

This study was conducted between February and April 2018. A quasi-experimental design was applied to answer the research question. A single school was assigned to participate in this research. This school was selected because it has been an inclusive institution for years, accepting students with SEN in every class, but it has never held a training intervention with regard to inclusive education for its teachers. This school has only charged one teacher with the responsibility of handling its inclusive education program and this individual is also given the responsibility of discharging the role of a classroom teacher. There were two measurement times: before and immediately after training program was performed.

Need Analysis Result

Before the authors designed the SERASI training module, it was necessary to comprehend the manner in which the inclusive education program is imparted by teachers in their classes. The authors conducted an observation at the school and also interviewed some teachers to understand their experiences and their opinions with regard to inclusive education. This need analysis yielded the result that the school never organized training or other interventions to help teachers gain a better understanding of inclusive education. The teachers were also never socialized about the inclusion program through any government efforts or material. The teachers who were interviewed wanted clarity about inclusive education and they desired to learn teaching strategies they could apply for students with SEN during their daily classroom practices.

SERASI Training Program

The data were collected at a primary school in East Jakarta. Each classroom in this school comprises 1-3 students with SEN and around 30 regular students. Before the training program was conducted, the researchers observed some classes and interviewed the teachers to ascertain the need areas. Subsequently, the training was designed on the basis of the results of the need analysis and by consulting the designs of similar training programs conducted by Srivastava, De Boer and Pijl (2015), and Kurniawati et al. (2016). Some other scholarly literature was also used as reference for teaching strategies for inclusive classrooms. This study modified the procedure followed by previous studies. In the present study, teachers were provided the chance to learn how to observe students to ascertain their SEN before recommending a student for a psychological assessment. The teacher was also given the opportunity to discuss and to offer opinions or recommendations about the inclusive program in their school. All training topics were imparted through experiential means using blind cases, roleplays, group discussions, and self-reflection.

After that, the design of the SERASI training program was granted proof of trial from an expert, the headmaster of the inclusive school, and the teacher who managed the school’s inclusive

program. Comments were given on the goals and methods of training, and some suggestions were offered for the program to incorporate more practical sessions and case studies.

The SERASI training program comprises 8 hours of face-to-face training sessions held over two days. On the first day, the module imparts information about students with SEN, such as the definition of special needs, the characteristics evinced by the range of disabilities that are usually found in inclusive schools, and the manner in which to handle each type of special education need stemming from those common disabilities. The focus for the second day is on the implementation of teaching strategies in inclusive schools. In the inclusive education session, teachers from other inclusive schools with years of experience in managing inclusive classrooms are invited as guest lecturers to share their expertise and to introduce the participants to the concept of the individual educational plan (IEP). In the final session, the teachers practice activities aimed at explaining teaching strategies for students with SEN. The collaborative learning method is also introduced as an inclusive strategy in this session and participants are given the opportunity to learn, practice, and discuss this strategy.

Participants must fill a self-reflection form after the completion of each session of the training program. Further, the participating teachers are asked to rate the session content and to answer several questions from the material discussed in each session. After all the sessions are accomplished, participants are asked to complete the MATIES measurement, to evaluate the training program, and to fill in the open-ended questionnaire.

Research Participants

The subjects of this study comprised all 26 of the teachers of a primary school in Jakarta. However, seven teachers could not attend all the sessions. None of the participants had any special education training or a relative who lived with disability. All teachers were charged with large classrooms with more than 30 students. The participants of the SERASI training program aged between 24 and 59 years. 74% of the participants were female, and 26% were male. All participants were already experienced in teaching in the inclusive school for 1-13 years, and their classes currently included 1-3 special needs students.

Measurement

The Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) was used to collect the data for this investigation. This measurement tool was adapted from Marian Mahat original version of MATIES (2008) and was developed by Farida Kurniawati (2016). It contains 18 items, six for each of the three subscales. The scale encompasses six points ranging from disagree very much (1) to agree very much (6). MATIES has been reported to offer good reliability (0.7) and the instrument consists of questions reflecting three attitude components: cognitive, affect, and behavioral.

Further, the authors of the present study desired to understand the school's facilities for students with SEN and to ascertain the opinions of teachers with regard to their school's attempts to impart effective inclusive education. Thus, three questions relating to the school's facilities and the opinions of teachers were incorporated, and each question offered several options for

answers from which the teachers could choose to agree. However, the opinion data obtained from the teachers was not analyzed with SPSS for the purposes of this study.

Analysis

This study was designed to determine the effects of the SERASI training program in eliciting positive attitudes in teachers with regard to inclusive education. In order to answer the research question on the attitudes of teachers, the MATIES score was analyzed through a T-test.

Results

Result of MATIES

Table I. Attitudes of the Teacher by Time

	Pre-test	Post-test 1
Minimum score	3, 66	3, 55
Maximum score	5, 33	5, 55
Mean	4, 58	4, 72
SD	0, 56	0, 56

*Means are based on six-point scale. (N=19)

Table II. MATIES Score for Each Component in the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Domain	Time	Minimum score	Maximum score	Mean	SD
Cognitive	Pre-test	2.67	5.5	4.38	0.73
	Post-test 1	3.17	5.67	4.67	0.76
Affective	Pre-test	2.5	5.67	4.34	0.9
	Post-test 1	2.5	5.67	4.42	0.83
Behavioral	Pre-test	4.5	6.00	5	0.42
	Post-test 1	3.67	6.00	5.08	0.49

The outcomes of the analysis of the MATIES scores revealed no significant differences the attitudes of the participating teachers toward inclusive education before and immediately after the conduction of the training program. However, a difference in the means score was observed between the pre-test (M=4.58) and the post-test (M=4.73). This outcome signifies that teachers who received the training program evinced similar attitudes towards inclusive education after the training session and indicated the “agreement” of teachers to the notion of inclusive education.

Result of Open-ended Question

The assessment of the open-ended questions asked revealed that the majority of the teachers (85%) agreed that their school was already successful in implementing inclusive education but some aspects still required improvement. Collaboration with parents of students with SEN and the belief of teachers that all students with SEN can avail of the same learning systems as regular students were the two aspects most commonly observed in support of the effective

implementation of inclusive education in this school. The teachers also reported that they would feel more confident teaching in inclusive classrooms if they received support from the headmaster and if they were imparted enough skills to teach students with SEN. Also, most of the teachers think that their lack of knowledge, the limited facilities and funds, and the absence of IEPs for students with SEN may be reasons why the education imparted in inclusive classrooms in their schools is ineffective.

Training Evaluation

Table III. Training Evaluation

Training Evaluation		
Duration of training program	Too Long	5%
	Just right	95%
	Too short	0%
Duration of each session	Too Long	5%
	Just right	85%
	Too short	10%
The topics were	Very relevant	76%
	Quite relevant	23%
	Irrelevant	0%
To which topics should we incorporate more information?	All topics : 62% Special needs : 28% Inclusive education : 5% Teaching strategies : 5%	

Discussion

The Effects of the SERASI training program in improving attitudes of teachers to inclusive education

This study aimed to examine the efficacy of the SERASI training program in improving the attitudes of teachers with regard to inclusive education. It can be concluded on the basis of the results of the MATIES that no significant differences were found in the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education even though the MATIES score on the post-test was higher than the pre-test tally. The training evaluation and the informal interviews with some of the teachers evinced that the teachers felt that the training program exerted a positive impact on them. This result strengthens the previous study's outcome with regard to the benefits of training programs in improving the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education (De Boer et al., 2014; Doll, 2003; Lequia, 2015; Greene, 2017; Tsakiridou & Plyzopoulou, 2014; Kurniawati et al, 2012) although some issue still need discussion.

A few reasons why the SERASI training program is likely to be effective in improving the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education in the long term are provided at this juncture. First, the topics discussed in the SERASI training program introduce a positive thought process to

participating teachers and helps them to better understand the concept of inclusive education. This increase of knowledge makes teachers feel more confident and helps them to clearly comprehend their responsibilities and roles in inclusive classrooms (Greene, 2017). Their new awareness also influences the expectations of the teachers from students with SEN with regard to their academic performance (Kiuuru et al., 2015; Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015; Acloglu, 2017). The findings from the informal interviews confirmed that teachers believed that their newfound knowledge would help them in imparting instructs on tasks or in creating lessons that were more considerate of the special needs students in their classes. The teachers also agreed that the training session would influence their expectations of academic performance from the students with SEN in their classes. The positive attitudes of teachers to inclusive education helps teachers understand that special needs are not the only factors influencing a student's academic performance (Greene, 2017; Tsakiridou & Plyzopoulou, 2014; Mumford & Chandler, 2009).

However, the fact that the results of the testing did not evince a significant effect of the SERASI training program in improving the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education was still a matter of concern for the authors. The results may demonstrate the difficulty teachers feel in showing their positive attitudes when they teach their classes due to external factors such as the number of students with SEN (Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015; Elisa & Wrastari, 2013) and the deficiency of special facilities in the school (Greene, 2017; Elisa & Wrastari, 2013; Tsakiridou & Plyzopoulou, 2014). Most of the participating teachers have more than two students with SEN in their classes. Previous studies have proved that teachers with more than two students with SEN find it difficult to be effective in imparting the curriculum in an inclusive classroom, especially if the students with SEN display different kinds of special needs (Greene, 2017). Teachers may also find it difficult to instruct students in inclusive classrooms effectively if they do not get support from the school's facilities. In the school where this study was conducted, teachers were never given the opportunity to attend a training or socialization program from the government with regard to the inclusive policy. Such external factors are sure to affect the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education (Elisa & Wrastari, 2013).

This result revealed that the teachers' attitudes are not formed only by internal factors such as their competence but that they are also influenced by external factors such as the facilities offered by the school or the number of students with SEN in their classes. The outcomes of this study suggest that future research on the subject should consider the effects of external factors in improving the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education. Future researchers should also consider the methods of observation and interviewing of teachers to clearly determine the attitudes of teachers to inclusive education as it applies in their daily lives. Also, the headmaster or teacher who is charged with the inclusive education program in a school should take into account the external factors when inclusive education policies are instituted in the school.

Second, the teachers need more time and opportunities to adapt their pedagogical methods and to apply the new strategies they have gained from the SERASI training program. Most of the participants have already accumulated more than 10 years of teaching experience. They have also developed a classroom habit, which would need more time to change. This finding is also

relevant to the outcomes of previous studies that have revealed that experienced teachers find it difficult to change their routines and practices in their classes (Greene, 2017; Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015; Delgado, 2011; Elisa & Wrastari, 2013; Tsakiridou & Plyzopulou, 2014). The informal interviews conducted with teachers also clarified that they require more time to learn about the new strategies to which they were introduced during the SERASI training program. In the teaching strategies session, the teachers are accorded the chance to learn and to practice the new strategies that are introduced. They are also provided with a blind case to help them better understand the new teaching strategies. However, it appears that the participants would require more opportunities to adapt to these methods. Future research projects may consider long-term training programs or workshops that devote a longer duration on teaching strategies. Future studies may also include microteaching modules to provide the teachers with more practice in the teaching strategies they learn in this program. This result also can represent a suggestion to the headmaster or to teachers who handle inclusive education programs in schools to organize more training programs to improve their teachers' skills in managing inclusive classrooms.

Could have influenced the results of this study is that the duration of the program's first day was reduced due to the announcement of mandatory attendance of all teachers to a meeting at another school about the national exam. Hence the training topics discussed on the first day were hastily conducted. In addition, while the teachers attended the SERASI training program, they were still required to give tasks or lessons to their classes. Hence, the teachers went to their class several times, interrupting the group discussions. This condition might affect the teacher's knowledge about the topics discussed. The school's commitment to the training program is crucial in decreasing the impact of unexpected events such as these on the study's result..

Conclusion

The attitudes of teachers to inclusive education is an essential element that determines the success or failure of implementing inclusive education in schools. However, only a few studies have evaluated the effect of training programs in improving the attitudes of teachers. This study revealed that the SERASI training program did not significantly improve the participating teachers' attitudes to inclusive education. The importance of a long-term training program is warranted as is the mitigation of external factors such as the number of students with SEN in a classroom or the augmenting of school facilities to support the impact of the training program. Future researchers may consider observation and interviews as methods to better understand a school's process of imparting inclusive education and the teachers' daily practices in their classrooms.

Finding

These findings represent additional evidence of the inclusive school intervention program since research on this topic is still very limited in Indonesia. Thus, implications and outcomes of this study may be used as suggestions for future research to strengthen the effectiveness of intervention programs that can improve the attitudes of teachers in inclusive schools. Future

research projects may consider long-term training programs along with the mitigation of external factors that can influence the effectiveness of the training program to alter the teachers' attitudes to inclusive education.

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