

Preschool Teachers' Attitude Toward Inclusive Education in Central Java, Indonesia

Diana^{1*}, Sunardi², Gunarhadi³, Munawir Yusuf⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Doctoral Program in Science Education, Sebelas Maret University

e-mail: 1*diana@mail.unnes.ac.id, 2sunardi.ipuns@gmail.com, 3gunarhadi@fkip.uns.ac.id, 4munawir_uns@yahoo.co.id

Abstract: This study aims to explore the knowledge and attitude of pre-school teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. This study involved 138 participants consisting of principals, curriculum developers and teachers in Central Java province, Indonesia. We used both open and closed questionnaires to collect data on their understanding and attitude toward inclusive education. The results revealed pre-school teachers' positive attitude and high acceptance response for children with special needs at their schools. However, teachers reported difficulties in handling children with special needs due to their lack of adequate knowledge and skills in managing learning in an inclusive education setting. Teachers needed special training to improve their professional competence to handle children with special needs and assist their learning process in an inclusive classroom.

Keywords: *inclusive education, knowledge, attitude, children with special needs*

INTRODUCTION

The application of inclusive education practice is not new in the world of education. The broadly defined inclusion was born after the emergence of Salamanca's international declaration in 1994. However, some developed countries in Europe and the Middle East had implemented education for children with special needs long before the declaration was proclaimed. Turkey is one of the countries that have implemented inclusion practices since 1983, but even now the information held by teachers related to how to work with children with special needs in inclusion classes is still felt to be very lacking (Bakkalo & Akal, 2013). In the last few decades the principle of implementing inclusive education has become one of the highlights of policy in every developing country, including in Indonesia. Some developed countries in Europe such as United Kingdom also experienced various obstacles in implementing the policy. Planning related to the curriculum, learning support facilities and infrastructure, and teacher resources are some of the obstacles in realizing inclusive education (Windiarti & Adderley). A SWOT analysis shows that inclusive education implementation in Indonesia itself has weaknesses, where the implementation of inclusion for children with special needs still requires attention in terms of curriculum, learning planning, and the maximum facilities available in each school (Anshory, 2018).

The Government of Indonesia through the Directorate of Early Childhood Education Development, Directorate General of Non-Formal and Informal Early Childhood Education, launched early childhood education nationally. The statement "Education For All" has become a motto in early childhood education programs. Early childhood education services are expected to provide opportunities for all children regardless of their condition to be able to get the same rights in the process of education and learning. Early childhood education institutions which are the foundation of children's education should also be able to provide opportunities for every child to get learning services suitable for them, especially those who have special needs.

Inclusive education services in the pre-school realm become an important part of education equity for every child, especially early childhood. Although it is legally formal in Indonesia, pre-school institutions have not become the basis of inclusive education, but the statement that every child also has the right to get education from an early age becomes the basis that even these institutions must include children from different backgrounds and aspects. As with primary and secondary education, basically, early childhood education is part of the implementation of inclusive education. Based on the research results Sunardi et al., (2011) showed, in terms of institutional management, the majority of schools had developed strategic plans (for inclusive programs), legally appointed coordinators, involved several related groups, and held a series of routine coordination meetings. However, there are still many schools that have not restructured their organizations (Sunardi, Yusuf, Gunarhadi, Priyono, & Yeager, 2011). Most of the others, according to the author, are included in the level of early childhood education (pre-school) which has not been the main focus in the application of inclusive education in Indonesia.

Programs in pre-schools have not been able to provide maximum service, which can support children with special needs in the learning process in the inclusive class. As a form of educational services at the preschool level, early childhood education is an education that lays the foundation to optimize its growth and development. Education given to early childhood will provide experience and provide a great influence on children's physical and mental development. Early childhood intervention is widely accepted as an effective way to prevent learning difficulties and to promote healthy development of children with special needs (Baglama & Demirok, 2016).

Inclusive Education in Indonesia

Inclusive education in Indonesia is organized in order to: (a) provide opportunities as broad as possible give proper education suited for the students' needs, (b) help accelerating the basic compulsory education programs, (c) help improve the quality of basic education by reducing the school hours and regulating school break, (d) create an educational system that respect diversity, non-discrimination, and friendliness in learning, (e) fulfill the mandate of the 1945 Constitution Article 32 paragraph 1 which states that every citizen in Indonesia has the right to receive education from elementary to university level, because this is in accordance with the objectives of governments' goal to educate the nation, one of which is by providing education.

Regulation of the Minister of Indonesian National Education No. 70 of 2009 defines inclusive education as a system of education that provides opportunities for all students who have special needs and have the potential intelligence and/or special talents to attend education or learning in an educational environment together with other students. Salamanca's special education action framework states that inclusive education means that schools must accommodate all children regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions, including disabled and gifted children, street children, nomadic children, children from various ethnic groups or cultures, and children from disadvantaged or marginalized groups (UNESCO, 2003).

Research related to the implementation in Indonesia is presented in general, including in relation to its application in elementary education, but there are still few reference related to implementation of inclusive education obtained by researchers in the form of published articles, specifically on early childhood education in Indonesia. Some studies related to the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia included a research conducted by (Darma &

Rusyidi, 2003) which described that the reality of inclusion implementation in Indonesia is still not in accordance with the concept and guidelines, in terms of students and teachers qualifications, facilities and infrastructure, as well as support from parents and the community. Organizing an inclusive school in Indonesia is still a rare phenomenon. Alfian (2013) stated that inclusive education can improve the quality of schools, both in terms of services, learning materials, and students, because it can accommodate the interests of each student according to their individual needs. The research result by Rasmitadila & Tambunan (2018) explained that primary school education has not yet become an effective program for the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. Support and assistants for inclusive classroom program were still needed in order to be more effective.

This study was conducted to explore teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward inclusive education in pre-school institutions. This is a preliminary study prior to the implementation of inclusive education.

METHOD

Research Design

This research was a quantitative research using survey as the data collection procedure. The surveys conducted were cross-sectional surveys by collecting one data at a time (Creswell, 2014). Data collection was done using an internet-based survey. This survey was designed in an online form using Google Forms. There were open and closed questions about the acceptance and views of inclusive education of pre-school teachers in Central Java region, Indonesia. This system provided a broad range of researchers to be able to collect data from respondents who were located in remote region. By using this online survey, the data can be collected faster (Carbonaro et al., 2002; Harlow, 2010).

Participants

There were 138 participants who joined the study voluntarily from pre-school institutions located in 20 regencies in Central Java. The participants' characteristics were reported in Table 1. The majority of participants were females, working as teachers in pre-schools and had been teaching for about 10-19 years.

Table 1. Participant's Characteristics

Characteristics	n	%
Gender:		
Male	5	4
Female	133	96
Job Position:		
Headmaster	21	15
Teacher	113	82
Curriculum Developer	4	3
Teaching Period:		
< 5 years	13	9
5 - 9 years	19	14
10 - 19 years	84	61
20 - 29 years	14	10
30 - 39 years	8	6
Region:		
North Central Java	54	39
South Central Java	19	13
East Central Java	28	20
West Central Java	37	28

Instrument

The questionnaire instruments used in the survey were instruments related to the Teachers' Attitudes toward Teaching All Students, and this TATIS was composed by Collen, et al (2010). This instrument was prepared by experts and had been tested for its validity. The instrument used had received permission from the instrument compilation team. Researchers were allowed to use the instrument in the preliminary research. TATIS instruments had been translated according to academic rules by translators. Additionally, this TATIS instruments were also had been specifically adapted to the situation and condition in Indonesia. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 18 with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which refers to the consistency of the entire question scale related to teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education as described in the table below.

Table 2. Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	138	100,0
	Excluded ^a	0	,0
	Total	138	100,0

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,803	12

The above table shows as many as 138 respondents. Based on the results of the Reliability Statistics table, it was known that the value of Cronbach's Alpha was $0.898 > 0.6$. So it can be concluded that the questionnaire was reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the characteristics of participants' data which was collected using online system, it can be analyzed that the participants in this study were 138 people consisting of teachers, principals, and curriculum developers from preschool institutions in Central Java region. This is reinforced by the statement that they were involved in school activities and programs, and participated in teaching in inclusive classes. It was known that teachers were not the only ones who have important roles in the implementation of inclusive classes. The responsibility of the principal was also significant as a controller and manager in all learning systems implemented at school. The principal became the decision maker and determined whether the institution accepted inclusive education or not. The knowledge and attitudes of principals about inclusion will influence and have significant impacts on teachers' knowledge and attitudes about inclusion. Based on participants' demographic data which consisted of gender, position, and teaching periods, the attitude of teachers showed that they did not refuse inclusive education. Most institutions expressed their openness to inclusive education, where principals and teachers have strong view and acceptance that each child is unique and requires proper care as well as education without discrimination, and teachers understand that every child has strength and weaknesses.

Based on the survey related to the divisions in the institution, it showed that not all pre-school institutions had special personnel who held the position as curriculum developers in their institutions. The involvement of curriculum developers in designing school programs, especially for inclusion classes was the most fundamental aspect because institutions must accommodate

the needs of each child, especially children with special needs. Another information in this study was that most school principals and curriculum developers in preschool institutions in Indonesia had an obligation to teach which means that they are actually teachers with additional positions. However, if we look at the ideal teacher figure, he/she was actually someone who focused fully on developing the learning process in the classroom. This shows that the participants in this study were teachers, with positions as classroom teachers and additional positions such as principals and curriculum developers. The teacher's knowledge of inclusive education became the foundation to determine the attitude of accepting differences that exist in each child, including children with special needs. Based on the answers given by the participants, the researchers concluded several statements of the answers related to the teachers' understanding of inclusive education definition which can be described as follows:

A total of 76 participants answered that inclusive education was education where children with special needs and other children are put in the same classroom and join the same learning activities. This provided opportunities and support for all students who have special needs to study well and improve themselves. They also added that a designated teacher was needed so that children with special needs can be served at school without having to be given different treatment and there must also be special educators so that the learning process at school can run well involving both children with special needs and other regular students. While 38 participants answered that inclusive education is a system of implementing special education for children who have special needs and the remaining 24 participants were not able to answer what inclusive education was because they did not know.

The results of participant open answers analysis showed that a number of respondents still did not know about inclusive education, while some others thought that inclusive education was education that only serve children with special needs. But most of the others have been able to explain clearly about inclusive education. There were participants who were able to describe inclusive education, but they had not been able to implement its principles as a whole. A number of facts obtained from research in several countries that had implemented inclusive education found that teachers still did not fully understand inclusive education concept, they also lacked of knowledge and skills to help children in inclusive classes, and some of them did not have the expertise needed in the inclusive learning process (Barbra & Joyline, 2014; Fleig, Forno, Bahia, & Veiga, 2015; Sylod, 2016).

This showed a positive attitude toward diversity in the process of inclusive education, especially the positive attitude of teachers who will deal with it in classroom learning, even though the learning process and curriculum used are not specifically designed for children with special needs. But others stated that it was close to inclusive education, because they understood that inclusive education included children with special needs in the classroom.

They had reasons not to accept children with special needs. From the respondents answers to some given questions, it can be concluded that although there were school which accepted inclusive education, there were also some which rejected its implementation in their schools, partly because they did not have the knowledge about inclusion, as well as not having teacher resources and appropriate facilities for inclusive education, so that they directly expressed their institution's non-acceptance of inclusive education. Basically it can be said that almost all institutions were unprepared to implement inclusive education, especially by including children with special needs in it. But the teachers' positive attitude to provide opportunities for every child to be able to develop optimally, comprehensively and be integrated together is one form of support for inclusive education.

A number of studies described that the lack of adequate teacher preparation for inclusive practices makes teachers powerless and unable to provide curricula that meet the learning needs of children with special needs (Akalin, Demir, Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, & İşcen, 2014; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). It is not easy for early childhood education teachers to design a learning process that meets the needs of each child, including children with special needs. This is not just about placing students with special needs in the main classroom room, but also how a teacher plans the quality of education for all children including their presence, participation, acceptance and achievements that have been made by children with special needs (Windarti & Adderley, 2015).

Teaching periods alone is not enough to make a teacher become a professional and want to learn about the knowledge and education system that has now developed. A small number of teachers with long teaching periods also did not have an open attitude toward inclusive education, so they rejected children with diversity and specificity in their school. Most teachers who had been instructed to teach in inclusive classes were lack of professional development in the form of training or teaching training in handling special needs children in their classes. Whereas one of the successes in the implementation of inclusive education is determined by the teacher's resources to participate in various trainings, so that the teacher can handle the students better and help them improve (Ajodhia, Amanda; Andrews; Frankel, 2010; Obeng, 2012; Mukhopadhyay, Nenty, & Abosi, 2012).

Previous study revealed 80% of preschool teachers in the Central Java region had never attended training related to education and inclusion programs. Based on the conclusions of open answers related to the training program that had been attended by the respondents, it showed that: (1) Trainings attended by teachers were usually related to curriculum development and learning for early childhood; (2) The trainings were related to the development of teaching skills in general, and (3) School administration management training. Some participants have received little training related to inclusive education, but it was more on the general sense, not specifically related to teachers' strategies in managing inclusive learning in the classroom.

Referring to the result of the participants' answers, it showed that they did not have good knowledge and skills regarding inclusive education. The teacher's attitude, knowledge and skills are fundamental for the acceptance of children with special needs to enter the classroom. Professional training and learning for teachers can open new perspectives and improve the learning process to be more effective, so that the implementation of inclusive education that receives children's diversity becomes more optimal (Bendová, Čecháčková, & Šádková, 2014; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). This preliminary study is the basis for researchers to follow up in the form of training and mentoring programs, which later can help preschool teachers in improving management skills in inclusive classes.

Research on inclusive education was part of education equity. This study provided an overview of the views and acceptability of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. However, the views and acceptability of parents about inclusive education in institutions was actually also an important factor, but was not part of the discussion in this study.

CONCLUSION

The willingness to accept differences possessed by each individual is one of the positive attitudes that teachers must have in the application of inclusion in preschool institutions. The teacher has a role to be able to manage learning with inclusive classes. Positive attitude alone is not enough to achieve successful implementation of inclusion in schools. Teachers must have the knowledge and experience needed to manage learning in inclusive classroom. The results of the study illustrated that the components involved in schools such as school principals, curriculum developers and teachers are in dire need of professional development in the form of training, which can help them handle children with diversity and specificity in inclusive classrooms..

REFERENCES

- Agbenyega, J.S., & Klibthong, S. (2015). Transforming Thai Preschool Teacher's Knowledge On Inclusive Practice: A Collaborative Inquiry. *Australian Journal Of Teacher Education*, 40 (7), 57-69. <http://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n7.5>.
- Ajodhia, Amanda; Andrews; Frankel, E. (2010). Inclusive Education In Guyana: A Call For Change. *International Journal Of Special Education*, 25 (674), 126-144.
- Akalin, S., Demir, S., Sucuoglu, B., Bakkaloglu, H., & Iscen, F. (2014). The Needs Of Inclusive Preschool Teachers About Inclusive Practices. *Eurasian Journal Of Educational Research*, 14 (54), 39-60. <http://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2014.54.3>.
- Alfian. (2013). Pendidikan Inklusif di Indonesia. *Edu-Bio*, 4.
- Anshory, I. (2018). SWOT Analysis on Inclusive Education in Indonesia, 231(Amca), 255-258.
- Baglama, B & Demirok, M. (2016). Determination of Preservice Special Education Teachers' Views On Early Childhood Intervention. *Cypriot Journal Of Educational Sciences*, 11 (4), 213-222.
- Bakkalo, H., & Akal, D.S. (2013). Inclusive Preschool Teachers: Their Attitudes and Knowledge about. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 5(2), 107-128.
- Barbra, M, & Joyline, N. (2014). The Inclusion Of Children With Mental Disabilities : A Teacher's Perspective. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences And Education (IJHSSE)*, 1(2), 65-75.
- Bendova, P., Cechackova, M, & Sadkova, L. (2014). Inclusive Education Of Pre - School Children with Special Educational Needs In Kindergartens. *Procedia – Social And Behavioral Sciences*, 112 (Icepsy 2013), 1014-1021. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.1263>.
- Braunsteiner, M., Bainbridge, J., & Wolodko, B. (2002), Using Internet Surveys To Gather Research Data From Teachers: Trials And Tribulations. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 18 (3), 275-292.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan Campuran* (4th Ed). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Cruickshank, V. (2012). Why Men Choose To Become Primary Teachers. *Joint AARE APERA International Conference*, 1-10.
- Darma, I. P., & Rusyidi, B. (2003). Pelaksanaan Sekolah Inklusi Di Indonesia. *Prosiding Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat: Riset & PKM*, 2 (2), 223-227. <http://doi.org/10.24198/ippm.v2i2.13530>.

- Fleig, L., Forno, D., Bahia, S., & Veiga, F. H. (2015). Gifted Amongst Preschool Children: An Analysis on How Teachers Recognize Giftedness, 5 (1), 707-715.
- Harlow, A. (2010). Online Surveys-Possibilities, Pitfalls And Practicalities: The Experience Of The Tela Evaluation. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 15 (2), 95-108.
- Mukhopadhyay, S., Nenty, H. J., & Abosi, O. (2012). Inclusive Education For Learners, With Disabilities In Botswana Primary Schools. *SAGE Open*, 2 (2), 1-9. <http://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012451584>.
- Obeng, C.S. (2012). Children With Disabilities In Early Care In Ghana. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 4 (2), 50-63.
- Rasmitadila, & Tambunan, Suryanti, A. R. (2018). Readiness of General Elementary Schools To Become Inclusive Elementary Schools: A Preliminary Study In Indonesia. *International Journal of Special Education*, 33 (2), 366-381.
- Sunardi, Yusuf, M., Gunarhadi, Priyono, & Yeager, J. L. (2011). The Implementation of Inclusive Education For Students With Special Needs In Indonesia. *Excellence In Higher Education*, 2 (1), 1-10. <http://doi.org/10.5195/EHE.2011.27>.
- Sylod, C. (2016). The Implementation of Inclusive Education For Children With. *Asian Journal of Educational Research*, 4 (4), 28-35.
- UNESCO. (2003). Overcoming Exclusion Through Inclusive Approaches in Education: A Challenge & A Vision. Conceptual Paper, 1-29.
- UNESCO. (2009). Policy Guidelines on Inclusion In Education In All. UNESCO, 1-36. <http://doi.org/ED-2009/WS/31>.
- Vislie, L. (2003). From Integration To Inclusion: Focusing Global Trends And Changes In The Western European Societies. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 18 (1), 17-35. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0885625082000042294>.
- Windarti, R., & Adderley, R. (2015). Indonesian Journal of Early Childhood Inclusive Classroom: Some Lessons From The UK. *Indonesian Journal of Early Childhood Education Studies*, 4 (2), 115-126. <http://doi.org/10.15294/ijeces.v4i2.9464>.