

Teachers' Competencies of Inclusive Early Childhood Education on Social Justice Perspective

Dina Novitasari Nasution^{1,*}, Rudiyanto²

^{1,2}Department of Early Childhood Education, School of Postgraduate, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: dinanasution@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

Inclusive early childhood education is an educational institution which is an early childhood part in getting equal education in the same learning environment regardless of race, religion, culture, economy, or even the physical condition of the child. In addition, development and learning include all the potential of the child. Therefore, in facing the diversity of children's characteristics, teachers are required to have more understanding and ability to deal with the inclusive children. The study aims to explore how the teacher competencies of inclusive early childhood education use an anti-biased approach towards multicultural children. Based on the finding of previous study about inclusive early childhood education teachers, the study can explore the development of early childhood education teacher competencies towards multicultural awareness and differences in children's physical condition. Furthermore, it can be used as a basis and study of the teacher competencies of inclusive early childhood education in the social justice perspective anti-biased towards the children with multicultural and different physical conditions. The study suggests that it can improve the teacher competencies of early childhood education in dealing with the inclusive children.

Keywords: *Teacher competencies, inclusive early childhood education, children diversity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is the children who are in a period of crisis developments, which if they are not developed properly, they will experience disruption in their development. Even though they experience disruption in their development or children with special needs, these children still deserve the opportunity to learn with their peers [1]. Inclusive early childhood education is an educational institution that provides equal education for every child regardless of race, religion, culture, economy, and physical condition. Furthermore, through inclusive early childhood education, it can provide experiences and learning for children with special needs covering all the potential of children. The diversity happened in early childhood education, teachers are required to have better understanding and be able to handle children with special needs well [2].

However, injustice still exists and creates a discriminatory environment towards the children with special needs. It is proven that there are still many children with special needs who have not received educational services in accordance with the children's characteristics [3]. In addition, It doesn't only occur towards the children but injustice also occurs to the parents of children with special needs who have difficulty

giving children's rights in getting education [4]. This problem is caused by teachers who have not been prepared to deal with children with special needs [5]. In facing children with special needs, it is required to prepare the mental and competencies of the teacher [6]. In the implementation of inclusive education, the important role of teachers is needed as a support for children with special needs [7] in achieving the successful implementation of inclusive education itself [8]. Teacher competencies in dealing with the children with special need is the important thing to be mastered in order to provide social justice for children in inclusive education. The article aims to explore how the teacher competencies of inclusive early childhood education, using an anti-bias approach to multicultural children.

2. TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In the implementation of inclusive education, teachers are the main factor in the success of education. However, the continuity of this education is influenced by the teachers' perception and attitude. Teachers' perceptions of the inclusive education implementation have positive perception, but several aspects such as

collaboration between main and special teachers need to be improved in dealing with the children whose are special needs [9]. Since the teachers have concerns about inadequate resources and the lack of inclusion support staff [8].

It is because the capacity of children with special needs received is more than the available teaching resources. Accepting children to inclusive education depends on how the teacher's understanding, beliefs, and attitudes toward special needs [10]. As well as the knowledge, awareness and understanding of special education teachers about early childhood intervention programs are important [11].

Teachers' belief and attitude can directly shape the way teachers deal with children which affect the children's learning environment [12] and shows the positive outcome for all children derived from a quality inclusive learning environment [13]. Inclusive quality depends on the teacher's attitude towards inclusion. Previous research shows that teachers who attend more education-related training for children with special needs have a more positive attitude towards inclusive education [14]. In addition, the teachers who are experienced will have a more positive attitude than teachers who are still less experienced [15].

Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is based on several factors including teacher training, the types of special needs experienced by children, teachers' knowledge of children's special needs, teachers' experiences dealing with children with special needs, and the professional abilities of teachers [16]. The more positive attitude that teachers have towards inclusion can set strategy and curriculum for children with special needs, not only that, but it also has positive beliefs about inclusion [17]. However, pre-service teachers who already have knowledge related to responsibility for children with special needs and have more confidence in teaching children, need to provide teaching skills and strategies in an inclusive manner [8].

The results showed that there was no difference in perspective between teachers who took lectures on early childhood and those who did not. Teachers still have to be competent in providing and planning efficient and appropriate programs based on children's needs [11]. For instance, in China, the inclusive education teachers make the concept of individual differences in dealing with multicultural children. The concept of individual differences has five categories, namely: perceptions of children's abilities, children's behaviour and motivation, children's personalities, family factors, and learning outcomes observed by teachers [18].

Furthermore, inclusive education also shows a negative attitude of teachers. If the teachers are not provided the knowledge about children with special needs, they will have a negative attitude when faced with

them. Negative attitude can lead to anger and frustration towards children with special needs because they feel that they add to their duty load [19]. In addition, it can make teachers not optimally in handling and teaching the children in inclusive education. Thus, it is necessary to provide special trainers for teachers in providing provisions towards children with special needs.

3. THE TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The competencies which early childhood education teachers must have as stipulated in the Regulation of Education and Culture Ministry No.137 of 2014 in the form of pedagogical competencies, personality competencies, professional competencies, and social competencies. These four competencies must be possessed by an early childhood education teacher. In early childhood education, the inclusion of teacher competencies other than those that have been determined, also has additional competencies because they are faced with children with special needs who need special handling during the educational process.

Several previous studies have found that there is a relationship between self-confidence and achievement or positive attitudes of teachers. Thus, the teachers who have confidence in their ability to face challenges can be a way in solving the problems faced by teachers [20]. Self-confidence is a competency that teachers must have to be able to solve problems both in the form of learning strategy and managerial learning. In addition, teacher competency is not only self-confidence competency, but there is also competency of loving intelligence/heart intelligence that is rarely used, even though it is very suitable for teachers to apply addressing diverse children in inclusive education [20]. Having heart intelligence competence will make the teacher easier in dealing with the diversity of children. Since equalizing between thought and feeling is appropriate to be used in educating early childhood, especially multicultural children.

Furthermore, regarding pedagogical competence, in the implementation of inclusive education there is an inclusive and hope pedagogy. Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching and learning approach that supports teachers to respond to individual differences between learners, but avoids the marginal that can occur when some children are treated differently [21]. Then, hope pedagogy exists to describe positive learning habits to increase children's involvement with peer education, as well as, it also provides learning experiences from various children's backgrounds [22]. Based on those competencies found, it is known that it is an effort to overcome the injustice received by children with special needs, so that children get the equal rights and needs.

4. SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE ON INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Inclusive education is seen as a concept to address and understand the diversity of needs of all children. Inclusive education aims to provide quality education that respects the diversity of needs, abilities and characteristics that can eliminate discrimination towards the children, UNESCO [12]. In fact, UNICEF also informs that children with special needs are mostly still not receiving optimal education service, and many children with special needs are "excluded" in the classroom (UNICEF) [23]. One of the problem factors is when children are in the program, children with special needs are not given the opportunity to show their abilities to their peers that they are capable and useful in the "real world", in the end their peers do not know and do not understand [24]. In essence, the children with special needs who are surrounded by peers are more skilled in an inclusive environment and provide the benefit for children's development [25].

One of social justice for children with special needs in inclusive education is shown by giving the children's right to get the equal education in an environment which does not limit and fulfil the needs of every child [24]. The implementation of inclusive education is also expected to be able to change children's attitude to be more positive towards differences that can form society to be non-discriminatory towards differences [26]. It relates with Browne's opinion stating that social justice is a principle that aims to respect "others" [27]. It means that they can accept multicultural children's differences.

However, in fact, the society has the belief that if children with special needs are given the equal educational services as normal children will be able to disrupt the educational process and have a bad effect on normal children. Whereas through the inclusive education program it can provide education related to the values of difference and diversity, so that children can respect and help each other [28].

Providing education toward the children with a variety of social justice perspectives during the inclusive education process will be successful, if teachers have a concern in understanding differences and become the basis for having awareness of differences when teaching and learning [29]. Bruns & Mogharreban [30] stated that the appropriate strategy and technique given to children in inclusive classroom need to be known by teachers in order to increase interaction between children, to build cooperation with children's families in developing the strategy to instil positive behaviour towards the children, and the classroom management owned by teachers is effectively used in the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers can also use a multicultural approach

to differentiate between justice and equality in order to respect the differences of each child [27].

At the preschool stage, it is necessary to instil attitude towards diversity and differences so that children understand cultural and racial differences. In this case, the teacher as the main role in charge needs to develop an anti-bias curriculum that opposes racism and upholds human justice and equality [31] which includes changes and modifications in terms of content, approach, and strategy that can fulfil the children's needs. In addition, it can form awareness in accepting diversity as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment if it is not a problem [3]. Some problems faced are related to children with special needs in inclusive education, namely: the proportional curriculum is used as a learning reference, the teacher's ability is limited in curriculum development, there are limited facilities and infrastructures, and teachers have difficulty assessing the abilities of children with special needs [32].

Meanwhile, teachers' lack of understanding about differences can be a form of injustice in inclusive education [28]. In spite of teachers' lack of understanding toward diversity, inclusive education can still be an effective education. Effective inclusive education is characterized by teachers who have recognized and understood the differences of each child according to their special needs in learning through positive curriculum and pedagogy support [4]. The success of inclusive education can provide social justice for children by fulfilling the children's rights and needs toward education service.

5. CONCLUSION

Inclusive early childhood education is an institution that provides equal educational services for children with diversity. Teachers have an attitude and perception of inclusive education. Teachers with a more positive attitude towards inclusion will be able to set strategy and modify the inclusive education curriculum. Then, teachers will also have positive beliefs about inclusion. In addition to pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies, the teachers of inclusive early childhood education also must have additional competencies in dealing with diverse children. They are self-confidence, loving intelligence and inclusion pedagogy competencies. Furthermore, dealing with various children through the teachers' attitude and competencies, inclusive education is a solution to provide social justice for children with special needs. Justice received by children can also be through the teachers' ability in modifying curriculum that can fulfil multicultural children's rights to get an equal education in the same environment.

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