

The Competence of Early Childhood Education Service Teachers in Providing Education Services to Children with Special Needs

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Abstract—The competence of teachers in handling children with special needs, for instance, identifying, assessing and compiling programs will also determine the accuracy in providing services for children with special needs, especially in early children education units. However, the limited knowledge and understanding of early teachers on children with special needs has an impact on some teachers still equating teaching methods to all students because teachers do not understand the right methods in dealing with children with special needs. The purpose of this study is to describe the objective conditions of the competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in providing educational services to children with special needs. The research method applied in this research is descriptive with a qualitative data approach. The study population was 15 early childhood education (PAUD) teachers and the research sample was five PAUD teachers who had the criteria for teaching children with special needs in Cikalong district, Tasikmalaya regency. The results show that the competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in providing educational services to Children with Special Needs in Kindergarten, Cikalong sub-district is still low and there is a need for continuous improvement in competence according to the characteristics of children. The competency measured in the teacher, namely understand the characteristics and learning needs of children with special needs, developing a curriculum, participating in activities to improve competence.

Keywords—competency, early children education teachers, qualitative research, children special needs

I. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education Services (PAUD) is an effort to fulfill the right to education for children with special needs (ABK) at an early age which aims to optimize children's abilities according to their developmental tasks. Early childhood education plays an important role in children's life [1]. Providing appropriate educational services for early childhood will help children achieve optimal development so that they can produce superior generations. This also applies to children with special needs, apart from developing their abilities as well as intervening and compensatory measures to

minimize problems that arise in the future as a result of their specialization.

One of the important components needed to support the above statement is adequate teacher competence in understanding the diverse needs of children. Quality early childhood education is not about program settings or models, but teachers as the key to quality education for children. Teachers must be ready to meet the needs of children in the aspects of development and broad personal characteristics so that the growth of typical children and children with special needs shows positive and optimal results [2]. All teachers working with heterogeneous groups of children with special needs will need special skills [3]. The importance of teacher competence in the form of knowledge, understanding, skills in handling ABK determines the quality of the special education services provided. There is a unique set of skills and knowledge required by teachers from ABK [4]. The abilities that teachers must have such as knowledge of the characteristics of children with special needs, the ability to identify and assess and formulate individual learning programs.

The competence of Early Childhood Education Service teachers in handling children with special needs means that children can be handled from an early age so that children's development can be optimal and can minimize the difficulties the child might face if not handled as early as possible. Conversely, if the Early Childhood Education Service teacher does not have the competence in handling ABK, it will have an impact on the accumulation of problems faced by early childhood specialists. Therefore, Early Childhood Education service teachers should have the competence in providing appropriate services for early childhood specialists.

The absence of individual programs for children with special needs makes children learn only because the demands in the classroom are not as their needs so that their potential does not develop optimally. Often children are considered incapable or even considered stupid in an aspect of learning because the teacher uses general assessment standards.

Children tend to be overlooked so that they are often assisted in their learning which results in low dependency and fighting power in children. Even though children with special needs do not mean that they have to be assisted often but are given a longer duration or simplification of tasks according to their abilities.

When conducting interviews, researchers also found the phenomenon of teachers who still called children with special needs with negative labeling such as disabled children, naughty / naughty children because these children experienced sensory barriers or had obstacles in learning. This labeling creates obstacles in optimizing the learning process for children with special needs in regular education. The difference in handling shows a picture of differences in teacher competence in the learning process between children with special needs and children in general. This condition demands special teacher competence in dealing with children with special needs so that they can provide the right service.

The focus of this research is to find out the objective conditions of Early Childhood Education Service teacher competence in providing educational services to children with special needs in Kindergarten in Cikalong District, Tasikmalaya Regency. So it is hoped that the existence of adequate competence in Early Childhood Education teachers in dealing with children with special needs will greatly help in maximizing the role of teachers in supporting inclusive education.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach, in other words, a study that is shown to describe and analyze phenomena, events,

social activities, attitudes, thoughts of people individually or in groups. The data were collected by careful observation, including descriptions in a detailed context accompanied by notes from in-depth interviews, as well as the results of document analysis [5]. This research is descriptive in nature, the research data is described in the form of a narrative regarding the subjects studied, namely the competence of Early Childhood Education Service teachers in providing educational services to children with special needs. The population in this study were 15 PAUD teachers who were willing to take part in the research based on the results of the questionnaire given. The population is then mapped by looking at the results of interviews and research observations, so that the sample taken is five Kindergarten teachers in Cikalong sub-district, Tasikmalaya Regency with additional consideration that the teacher has experience with children with special needs in their class so the sampling technique used is using purposive sampling technique. The research results obtained are in the form of descriptions according to research indicators of the three types of ABK faced by research subjects. The data collection technique was done by interviewing, observing and studying the documentation whose validity was tested using the source triangulation method. The data obtained were processed and analyzed further using interactive model analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Based on interviews and observations and supported by documentation studies on several aspects of teacher competence, several things were obtained which can be seen in the table 1.

TABLE I. THE RESULT OF RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

Aspect	Indicator	Conclusion				
		<i>R1</i>	<i>R2</i>	<i>R3</i>	<i>R4</i>	<i>R5</i>
A	A1	Able to mention the characteristics of children with special needs in their class, namely children with visual impairment	Able to mention the characteristics of children with special needs in their class, namely children with hearing impairment	Able to mention the characteristics of children with special needs in their class, namely children with speaking impairment	Able to mention the characteristics of children with special needs in their class, namely children with autism	Able to mention the characteristics of children with special needs in their class, namely children with visual impairment
	A2	Already able to identify difficulties faced by children during the learning process	Identify difficulties faced by children even though subjectively	Identify difficulties faced by children even though subjectively	Identify difficulties faced by children even though subjectively	Already able to identify difficulties faced by children during the learning process
	A3	Do not know the assessment so that they cannot carry out the assessment to find out the needs of ABK supported, in the absence of physical evidence	Don't know the assessment yet, so you can't carry out the assessment to find out the learning needs of children with special needs, supported by the absence of physical evidence	Don't know the assessment yet, so you can't carry out the assessment to find out the learning needs of children with special needs, supported by the absence of physical evidence	Don't know the assessment yet, so you can't carry out the assessment to find out the learning needs of children with special needs, supported by the absence of physical evidence	Don't know the assessment yet, so you can't carry out the assessment to find out the learning needs of children with special needs, supported by the absence of physical evidence

Table 1. *Cont.*

B	B1	Already mastered, there is physical evidence of learning administration	Already mastered, there is physical evidence of learning administration	Already mastered, there is physical evidence of learning administration	Already mastered, there is physical evidence of learning administration	Already mastered, there is physical evidence of learning administration
	B2	Already compiled lesson study but have not made IEP, supported by the absence of physical evidence related to IEP.	Already compiled lesson study but have not made IEP, supported by the absence of physical evidence related to IEP.	Already compiled lesson study but have not made IEP, supported by the absence of physical evidence related to IEP.	Already compiled lesson study but have not made IEP, supported by the absence of physical evidence related to IEP.	Already compiled lesson study but have not made IEP, supported by the absence of physical evidence related to IEP.
	B3	ABK material is equated with children in general	ABK material is equated with children in general	ABK material is equated with children in general	ABK material is distinguished from children in general	ABK material is equated with children in general
C	C1	Have attended training on learning but never attended training on ABK, supported by physical evidence of training certificates	Have attended training on learning but never attended training on ABK, supported by physical evidence of training certificates	Have attended training on learning but never attended training on ABK, supported by physical evidence of training certificates	Have attended training on learning but never attended training on ABK, supported by physical evidence of training certificates	Have attended training on learning but never attended training on ABK, supported by physical evidence of training certificates

Note:

A : Under-stand the characteristics and learning needs of children with special needs

A1 : Describe the characteristics of ABK

A2 : Identify the difficulties faced by ABK

A3 : Carry out an assessment to determine the learning needs of children with special needs

B : Developing a curriculum

B1 : Understand the principles of curriculum development

B2 : Develop lesson plans that suit the various conditions of children

B3 : Choose material that is in accordance with the learning objectives set while still paying attention to the characteristics of the child

C : Participate in activities to improve competence

C1 : Take self-development training related to learning

B. Discussion

The research results will be discussed and elaborated based on the findings of the instrument indicators, as follows:

1) *Understand the characteristics and learning needs of children with special needs:* Children with Special Needs are unique individuals who differ from one another. Therefore, the teacher must be able to understand the characteristics of each child. Teachers' understanding of the characteristics possessed by children with special needs has an impact on accuracy in meeting their learning needs so that children can develop optimally.

For information, the children with special needs faced by each respondent are different, namely R1 a blind child, R2 a deaf child, R3 a deaf child, R4 a child with autism, R5 a blind child. Based on the research results, all respondents can find out the characteristics of the ABK they serve even though they are not too deep. Almost all respondents identify the characteristics of children with special needs based on their observations of emerging behaviors that are different from other children. Respondents also got information about the specificities of the child from the stories told by the parents. 2 out of 5 respondents have been able to identify the difficulties faced by children with special needs by looking at the physical condition of children, namely blind children so that they have placed them close to the teacher so that they hear the teacher's voice more clearly.

Children with special needs are identical to assessment. Assessment is an important activity in planning programs for children with special needs. The 5 main objectives of assessment in educational settings are screening and

identification to screen and identify those who may experience learning barriers or problems; eligibility and diagnosis to determine whether a child has a disability and is eligible for special education services; IEP's development and placement to provide detailed information so that individual learning programs can be created and developed and to decide on the appropriate placement of children in education; Instructional planning to plan and develop learning in accordance with the special needs of children; evaluation to evaluate children's progress [6].

These assessment skills need to be possessed by teachers as basic materials in preparing educational programs for children with special needs. But in fact, the results showed that almost all respondents studied did not know the assessment and what the assessment was related to with children with special needs. Technical competence in conducting assessments is a necessity in identifying students correctly. Lack of competence in selecting appropriate tests and managing instrument assessments can lead to misidentification or lack of identification [7] which results in inappropriate educational services provided to children with special needs.

Three of the five teachers studied stated that assessment was the same as evaluation, which was an activity to assess children's learning abilities. The remaining two answered that they never heard the assessment. Therefore, none of the studied subjects had ever assessed ABK. Ignorance of the assessment has an impact on the ability of the children with special needs faced by each teacher to not develop optimally. According to Wortham [8], if PAUD teachers do not have the competence in carrying out the assessment, it is difficult to know the level of development or otherwise experience developmental delays, as a result the teacher cannot provide educational services

according to the needs of each child, besides that the teacher will also find it difficult to design lessons that can be optimize child development.

2) *Developing a curriculum:* In this aspect, all respondents already understand the principles of curriculum development for early childhood. All teachers have made Semester Programs, Weekly Programs and RPPH according to the standards applicable to early childhood. However, all respondents did not make individual learning programs to accommodate the learning needs of children with special needs. Meanwhile IEP is a program where data is not separated from ABK related to special services that cannot be obtained only from regular classes. IEP aims to provide the best educational services for students with special needs through the provision of learning that suits their needs [9]. Of the five teachers studied, 1 respondent knew the meaning of individual learning programs even though they did not know what was the basis for its preparation. There is no special program for children with special needs, all respondents use the same program for both typical children and ABK. Ignorance of the procedure and format for making individual learning programs is also the main reason almost all respondents did not make it. Drasgow et al., revealed that for all students who receive special education services in either regular education or special education settings, special education teams are required to develop IEPs for all students receiving special education services [10]. The IEP should contain several key components including (a) a description of the types of special education programs students will receive, (b) what services the school will provide to students with disabilities, and (c) measurable annual goals and objectives. Smith stated that the IEP supports individual learning against a backdrop of egalitarian views of mankind with the aim of providing adequate educational opportunities for children and adolescents with disabilities [11]. Thus, the importance of IEP cannot be minimized and overlooked. This means that PPI must be an important component of the design and implementation of learning in improving student learning and teacher teaching.

The accuracy of individual learning programs depends on the accuracy when analyzing the assessment results. The benefits of PPI for children with special needs are programs that are tailored to the abilities and needs of children without ignoring the limitations of the children so that their abilities can develop optimally. The main benefit of the IEP is the fulfillment of individual learning needs for students with special needs [12].

3) *Participate in activities to improve competence:* The aspect of participating in activities to improve competence is one of the efforts made by teachers to gain knowledge and insights to be able to develop themselves. In this aspect of self-development, all teacher respondents stated that they

often attended training organized by related agencies or independently organized from their respective schools. This training is one of the supporting tools in increasing teacher competence on topics related to the learning process and self-development. Al-Zoubi and Rahman expressed the importance of official training programs, especially those that adopt the workshop method aimed at improving teacher performance and increasing educational capacity to help them acquire skills, knowledge and to update information on the latest developments in education [13].

Some of the training topics were dominated by learning for early childhood, however the teachers stated that they had never attended any training related to ABK. This was conveyed by teachers who felt a lack of emphasis on experience in the training that had been given. The teachers realize the importance of competence regarding ABK because the conditions in the field are indeed quite a lot of children with special needs at early age who enter school. This training usually takes different forms such as training workshops, courses or training offered by educational institutions or institutions where teachers work or even courses offered by institutions from universities [14]. It is also intended that teachers can provide meaningful and quality learning not only to regular children but also to special needs children. The quality of learning services provided by educators to ABK is directly related to the training they receive [15]. Thus this situation shows the need for educators for appropriate training in accompanying or teaching in regular classes but having ABK.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of aspects of teacher competence, which consists of understanding the characteristics and learning needs of children with special needs, developing curricula and participating in activities to improve competence, it shows that the competence of PAUD teachers in providing educational services to special needs children in Kindergarten, Cikalong District, is still low. and there needs to be a continuous improvement in competence in accordance with the characteristics of the child. Some of the competencies measured include:

- Understand the characteristics and learning needs of children with special needs
- Developing a curriculum
- Participating in activities to improve competence

This is indicated by the number of respondents who do not have an understanding of the provision of services for children with special needs at the school. Things that can be done by related agencies both schools and regional orders are increasing the professional development of early childhood education teachers by providing training and special seminars related to children with special needs so that the education services for children with special needs in PAUD schools can be served more optimally.

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