



Training to Strengthen Middle School Teacher Competence in Learning Children with Special Needs: Needs Analysis

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Abstract. The existence of students with special needs in public junior high schools in various provinces in Indonesia since the affirmation route for New Student Admission (PPDB) policies with special needs in the last two years has not been widely supported. In general, this is due to the unprepared ability of teachers to provide services to students with disabilities. This is due to the lack of training for junior high school teachers in addition to the absence of reinforcement during the education process for prospective teachers. This study is a survey of 105 teachers (male $n = 20$, 19%, and female, $n = 85$, 81%) in one district in Yogyakarta. The survey was conducted online on 64 public schools and 2 teachers were invited in each school. Based on the survey, it was found that the majority of junior high school teachers in the district: a) had no experience teaching children with special needs ($n = 71$, 59.2%), b) had never attended training on inclusive education ($n = 103$, 85.8%) and c) had little ($n = 74$, 61.7%) and no knowledge ($n = 17$, 14.2%) regarding government policies on services for children with disabilities. Therefore, it is very reasonable if d) most teachers state that the level of confidence is low in teaching children with special needs ($n = 42.35\%$), and very low ($n = 17$, 14.2%). However, the majority of teachers stated that e) had interacted with individuals with disabilities ($n = 90$, 75%). Based on this information, a training stage was developed for participants (teachers and school principals) which could be replicated in various other regions in Indonesia.

Keywords: Need analysis · Inclusive education · in service teacher training

1 Introduction

The enrollment of students with special needs in regular schools has begun to be held in various provinces in Indonesia since 2020 and in 2021 it is required by the government for all provinces in Indonesia as regulated in permendikbud no. 1 of 2021. This is supported by the government's policy to equalize access to education to all students, including students with special needs. The existence of special schools that are still limited in terms of number and distribution in various provinces in Indonesia such as in North Sumatra and Irian Jaya is one of the basics for the implementation of inclusive

education in Indonesia to complete the 12-year WAJIB BELAJAR DIKDAS which was launched in 2015.

The presence of learners with special needs in regular schools has increased sharply from year to year as the government encourages the implementation of inclusive education. This can be seen from the increase in the number of inclusive schools presented by the Director of Community Education and Special Education at the International Conference at UNP on July 1, 2021. There were reportedly 29,300 inclusive schools in 2019, up 22% to 35,818 schools in 2020. This increase in the number of inclusive schools was accompanied by the number of students with special needs (PDBK) in 2019 as many as 95,175 students and an increase of 31% in 2020 to 124,496 students. The existence of students with special needs is spread across various levels of education, namely 21,071 PDBK at the PAUD level, 59,492 at the elementary school level, 24,988 at the junior high school level, 622 high school, 59 vocational schools, 665 PKB, and 14 SKB. If you look closely, there is an increase in GDPK from kindergarten to elementary school level. This can be possible because many PDBK are starting to be diagnosed at the elementary level. In addition, there was also a decrease in the amount of GDPK from the elementary level to the junior high school level. The decline in access to education from elementary to junior high school raises many questions because disability is not like a curable disease but as a condition. Some of the assumptions that can occur are due to the decrease in the education participation rate in GDPK due to various factors, including the limited number of junior high schools that accept them. Although all schools are required to receive PDBK, school readiness is still very minimal. This needs to be further explored to provide support for schools, especially the junior high level to be able to accommodate the needs of PDBK through teacher training.

The existence of PDBK in regular schools as part of the implementation of inclusive education requires a paradigm shift in educational practice in regular schools. This is not just the existence of PDBK but there are consequences for changing school responsibilities [1]. This answer is specifically explained by [2], as a learning practice in the classroom that focuses on meeting the needs of all students without exception PDBK so that there are changes in class arrangement, student groupings, relationships between teachers in supporting the student learning process, student learning assessment process, and communication with parents, students, and other teachers to support services to all students. To be able to meet this, strengthening teacher competence is needed with consideration of the large amount of teacher education taken by teachers today does not fully equip an understanding of learning needs and how to meet the learning needs of students with special needs. The urgent need regarding the training of teachers and principals has been conveyed in the last 10 years [3]–[5].

The need to increase teacher competence to be able to answer challenges in inclusive classrooms and provide services to students with special needs is increasingly tangible [6]–[8]. The specific needs of the PDBK require teaching skills that are different from the teaching of students in general. This is due to the uniqueness of the way of learning from PDBK as a result of their disability conditions making their learning profile different between having poor tasks in previous classes [9], less motivation and less curiosity [10, 11], have social and behavioral problems, such as the high number of absentees [12, 13]. These unique conditions lead to different profiles and ways of learning PDBK and

require the knowledge and skills of teachers who are able to combine understanding the material, with flexibility in diverse ways of delivery, and assessment and management of behavior in the classroom.

The existence of PDBK in regular schools without support for teachers and schools will increase the risk of teacher stress [14]. In addition it can trigger the appearance of rejection for some children with special needs, especially for those with severe behavioral and special needs problems [15]. These challenges have been reported by previous studies [16] which conducted interviews with 60 respondents in Jakarta, West Java, Yogyakarta, Central Java, and Bali. This study found learning barriers expressed by PDBK related to negative attitudes of friends and teachers. This happens when in the context of this study teachers state that they still have difficulty accessing training so that they have difficulty making adjustments to teaching materials, learning processes, and learning evaluations are still the same as other students who do not experience special needs. This fact is different from the results of previous studies conducted by Sunardi and colleagues [17] which found that 68% of inclusive schools that were respondents to this study stated that they had made the necessary learning modifications according to the needs of special needs students. This can be possible because of the differences in research respondents who have become demonstrated to be inclusive schools so that it is possible to receive adequate training on inclusive education. Therefore, when THE GDPK is currently required to be implemented in all schools, the need for teacher strengthening becomes necessary to map out immediately.

With the policy of special needs students enrollment in all schools that are just running while school readiness is still minimal, it is necessary to map the need for strengthening teachers needed to be able to provide services to PDBK at the junior high school level. This will help a lot in the development of teacher training curricula that can be carried out by education offices and universities on an ongoing basis. Therefore, this research focuses on mapping the needs of strengthening teacher competencies at the junior high school level in order to formulate an appropriate curriculum for strengthening teacher competencies.

2 Research Method

This study is a survey research using a descriptive approach. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the local Education Office and was conducted online through the social media community without any consequences for participation in this survey. The questions in the survey contained respondents' demographic data (age, gender, teaching experience, PDBK teaching experience, last education) in the form of multiple choices and various supporting information in the form of open-ended questions. Supporting information includes: training that has been attended, training topics that have been attended, interaction with individuals with disabilities, prior knowledge of government policies regarding PDBK services, knowledge of individuals with disabilities, confidence in teaching PDBK, the existence of PDBK in the current classroom, training needs. In addition, it was also revealed about the efforts that teachers have made today, the concerns they have, and the support needed to provide services to all students including PDBK. The survey was conducted on all public junior high schools in one of the districts in

Yogyakarta, totaling 58 junior high schools with a total of 120 respondents (10% of the total teachers totaling approximately 1200 in the 2019 BPS data).

3 Result and Discussion

Based on a survey of 120 respondents who are teachers of public junior high schools, matters related to 1) training that has been followed and proposals for future training, 2) teacher knowledge related to PDBK policies and services, 3) the existence of PDBK in the current classroom, 4) efforts that have been made at this time, 5) concerns that are owned and 6) the support needed. The details of each of these findings are presented and discussed with a focus on the formulation of the necessary teacher training.

3.1 Training that has been Attended on Inclusive Education

The majority of participants had never attended training on inclusive education ($n = 103.85.8\%$). Of the 17 respondents (14.2%) who had stated that they had participated in training on inclusive education, the training topics consisted of: gender equality, and social inclusion for disabilities, seminars on children with dyslexia, curriculum modifications for PDBK, teacher learning inclusion series, getting to know Inclusion Education, the basic concept of PI, inclusive Counseling Guidance, development of PDBK identification and assessment, and inclusion education management. Based on the topics above, it can be seen that various topics ranging from general knowledge about disability issues, introduction to inclusive education, to assessment and curriculum adjustment have been followed by several respondents. This is possible because offers regarding inclusive training are widely offered with various patterns. Starting from school representatives who are sent to training at the national level that lasts several days, online seminars that last one day and are general introduction, and materials focused on PDBK support in inclusive schools that can only be accessed by a few teachers. This fact shows that teacher strengthening activities have been widely offered and have been utilized by 14.2% of respondents from this study based on school appointments and personal motivations. One of the means of strengthening online teacher competencies has been supported by the Teacher Learning and Sharing program of the Inclusive Education series which can be accessed through <https://ayogurubelajar.kemdikbud.go.id/seri-inklusif/>.

With the large number of teachers in Indonesia in various regions, the pattern of training by sending one teacher and then sending it to other teachers in schools can be effective in terms of financing, but in terms of effectiveness, the target of strengthening the readiness of PDBK services needs to be reviewed. Previous research [18, 19] suggests that strengthening teacher competencies for THE delivery of PDBK services needs to be done on a school-based basis. This is in line with the statement of [20] that inclusive education is not just a different learning technique and strategy but about a commitment in reviewing educational objectives that look at the participation and involvement of all students without exception by all components of the school (teachers, schools, parents). This commitment will certainly be easier to build if the training is not only attended by one teacher, but teachers and principals as a team that will encourage a fundamental

change process in the implementation of inclusive education in schools [21]. Furthermore, Ainscow and colleagues [22] found that in school change there are contributing factors, including: incentives that encourage collaboration between school personnel, the willingness of principals and teachers to move forward collaboratively, identification of top priorities relevant to stakeholders, the existence of support in the form of consultants who cooperate with schools, and the willingness of local governments to be involved in the collaborative process [18, 19][20][21][23].

The existing teacher training needs to be carefully studied, especially on the design and content offered. Stated six principles in improving teacher competence in inclusive schools, namely: [24] involvement of teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders in dialogue regarding the necessary competencies, development of a vision for teacher professional development integrated in overall school planning, reflections carried out in an integrated manner in the program cycle for the needs of adaptation to change, sensitivity to school and regional contexts, and monitoring the effectiveness of training related to teacher competencies.

Based on the above presentation, strengthening the competence of teachers to provide services to PDBK cannot be separated from the context of schools and it is necessary to involve a team that will jointly encourage the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Therefore, the involvement of team elements consisting of teachers and principals needs to be carried out from the beginning in training on strengthening school capacity for PDBK services.

3.2 Teacher Knowledge of PDBK Services

Regarding the previous data showing the lack of training on inclusive education, the majority of participants had little knowledge ($n = 74, 61.7\%$) and nothing at all ($n = 17, 14.2\%$) regarding government policies on the services of children with disabilities. This is a fact that must be responded to immediately with the various knowledge and skills necessary to support PDBK services.

The four studies above are carried out in almost the same way, namely conducting quantitative research by presenting a number of competency lists to teachers in regular schools and they identify which competencies are important to master in carrying out their role in supporting PDBK learning. Based on the four studies above, it can be seen that there are four essential knowledge and abilities that teachers must master to support PDBK, namely: a) the ability to identify PDBK learning needs, b) use various differentiated learning strategies, and c) classroom management. Furthermore, this list of knowledge and abilities can be on the agenda for training on strengthening teacher competencies in inclusive schools. The lack of teacher training followed by the majority of respondents in this study had an impact on the confidence level of those who stated that they were still in the low category of teaching children with special needs ($n = 42.35\%$), and very low ($n = 17.14.2\%$). This is in line with cognitive social theory (Bandura, 1977) which relates self-confidence to four sources, namely: a) direct experience, the experience of seeing good practice in teaching in inclusive schools; b) verbal information, information obtained regarding knowledge of PDBK supporters in inclusive schools, as well as verbal support from peers; c) emotional, a feeling of success when it can overcome

or support PDBK, and d) performance achievements, successful experience in dealing with PDBK.

3.3 The Current Existence of Student with Special Needs

Based on the respondent's statement, not all participants had PDBK in the class. However, most other respondents reported the presence of PDBK in their class consisted of a variety of special needs, including: a) children with intellectual barriers ($n = 41.34\%$), b) children with learning difficulties ($n = 29.24.2\%$), c) children with attention barriers ($n = 32.26.7\%$), d) children with physical barriers ($n = 20, 16.7\%$), e) children with visual impairments ($n = 11, 9.2\%$), f) children with hearing loss ($n = 11.9.2\%$). Based on the respondent's statement, not all participants had PDBK in the class. However, most other respondents reported the presence of PDBK in their class consisted of a variety of special needs, including: a) children with intellectual barriers ($n = 41.34\%$), b) children with learning difficulties ($n = 29.24.2\%$), c) children with attention barriers ($n = 32.26.7\%$), d) children with physical barriers ($n = 20, 16.7\%$), e) children with visual impairments ($n = 11, 9.2\%$), f) children with hearing loss ($n = 11.9.2\%$).

3.4 Efforts Already Being Made at this Time in the Classroom

In an open question, respondents stated some of the efforts they have taken so far in supporting GDPK in schools. Although the majority have not received proper training support, respondents have stated the most that they have provided an individual approach ($n = 46$). The forms of individual approaches that have been applied include: (1) special assistance according to the needs of students, (2) learning that is tailored to the abilities of students by providing materials and questions with a lower level of difficulty, (3) the teacher seeks to understand the learning difficulties experienced by learners and give special treatment, (4) listen when they want to tell a story, (5) understand the emotions of pdbk and try to be more patient, and (6) changing the seat position at the front so that it is easier to know if you need help.

In addition to paying special attention to PDBK, respondents ($n = 12$) also stated that they had collaborated with parents, guidance and counseling teachers, as well as puskesmas and psychologists. Respondents ($n = 8$) also stated that they have not provided special services to PDBK. The diversity of teachers in providing support to PDBK is possible because their understanding of the needs and support that needs to be given to PDBK is still diverse. Therefore, the knowledge and skills of essential teachers in inclusive schools as identified above need to be immediately given to teachers at the middle and high school levels so that they can more easily provide support to PDBK.

3.5 Concerns Shared by Teachers

Most teachers are worried that PDBK will not be able to socialize with their peers and be bullied by their peers and experience a lag in subject matter. This can be understood because teachers have not mastered various strategies and techniques in forming a positive learning environment so that the presence of PDBK is not accepted by their

peers. The social skills profile of the PDBK with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties is almost similar [12, 13, 25]. In children with specific learning difficulties, they have difficulty processing social cues that will have an impact on social problems (Bauminger et al., 2005) because they may choose improper conflict resolution. Similarly, learners with intellectual disabilities also have problems in the processing of social information, specifically for the recognition of emotions and the skills of interpretation of certain situations (van Nieuwenhuijzen et al., 2011). Both types of disabilities have social problems due to a lack of understanding of the meaning of the facial expressions of others, so they tend to give inappropriate feedback. That is why they tend to be rejected by their peers and have problems in developing friendships because of their difficulty in forming social interactions.

Teachers' concerns on PDBK that they will be ostracized by peers are also supported by previous research that found that they tend to be less accepted by peers and teachers [25]–[27] due to a less friendly social environment. Bullying and victimization from peers are also reported by PDBK compared to other students [28]. Therefore, teachers need to create a positive environment for all students to develop healthy social interactions to provide a conducive learning atmosphere. In addition, at the same time, this condition also supports the efforts of teachers to improve the social and behavioral skills of students with mild disabilities.

Respondents' concerns about pdbk academic ability that may be missed subject matter are also supported by previous research. The condition of PDBK with intellectual barriers and specific learning difficulties requires material adjustments and when the material and curriculum have not been adjusted so that it can be ascertained that PDBK will lag behind the class. This is because the PDBK has less cognitive skills and has problems related to lower academic achievement compared to its peers [12, 13, 25]. Low motivation and lack of interest in school are two common traits of students with mild disabilities [29]. However, learners with intellectual barriers and learning difficulties have different cognitive characteristics that the teacher needs to understand. The IQ scores of children with PDBK with intellectual inhibition were lower than that of students with sepsific learning difficulties (Sabornie et al., 2006) and their cognitive profiles were different [12]. Students with mild intellectual inhibitions have below-average intellectual abilities ranging from 50 to 75 (2 Deviation Deviation deviations below average) that affect their learning due to deficits in their memory range, generalization ability, reasoning skills, abstract thinking, and attention [29]. In contrast, students with specific learning difficulties have intellectual abilities ranging from average to above average, but such students have difficulties in mental processing, which affect their thought processes and affect their learning [29]. Thus, academic problems in PDBK have different causes so that they require different interventions. Therefore, an understanding of the conditions of various specificities and impacts on the learning process needs to be mastered by teachers to understand the determination of appropriate support strategies.

4 Conclusion

Strengthening support to PDBK in each region requires strengthening designed based on the uniqueness of each region so that the needs analysis needs to reveal things such

as 1) training that has been followed and proposals for future training, 2) knowledge of teachers related to PDBK policies and services, 3) the existence of PDKB in the classroom at this time, 4) efforts that have been made at this time, 5) concerns that are owned and 6) support needed. From the results of the six searches, it was found that a) most respondents did not have experience teaching children with special needs (n = 71, 59.2%), b) had never attended training on inclusive education (n = 103, 85.8%) and c) had little knowledge (n = 74, 61.7%) and none at all (n = 17, 14.2%) regarding government policies on the services of children with disabilities. It is therefore quite natural that d) most teachers state that the level of self-confidence is low in teaching children with special needs (n = 42.35%), and very low (n = 17, 14.2%). Based on this situation, it is designed to strengthen the competence of school-based teachers by involving a school team consisting of at least principals and teacher representatives to explore general materials and special materials to support PDBK. This material is studied based on the needs in the context where this research was conducted and an in-depth literature review conducted by the research team. Two training schemes are produced, namely general which includes the Policy and Implementation of Inclusive Education, the Philosophy and Implications of Inclusive Education in Educational Services and Individuals with Special Needs: Who and What Are the Learning Needs? Special materials are distinguished for teachers and principals. This procedure for determining the design for strengthening teacher competencies can be replicated in other regions to provide reinforcement according to the needs of each diverse and school-based region.

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