

Index for Inclusion in Instructional Practice at Elementary Schools

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Keywords: Elementary school, Inclusive classroom, Index for inclusion.

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to measure index of inclusion of the inclusive classrooms in elementary schools and to examine the teachers' attitude, perception, and concerns toward the inclusion of children with special needs in the regular education classrooms. This study used concurrent mixed methods. The participants were 10 elementary school teachers deliberately selected from schools identified as actively implementing inclusive education programs. The inclusion index was measured through an observation and the teachers' attitude, perception, and concerns toward the inclusion of children with special needs were collected through a focus group discussion. The results revealed that index of inclusion in inclusive classrooms at elementary schools had not been optimal yet with average of inclusion index amounting to 38.58 of ideal index 48. Teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms. In addition, teachers have perception that inclusive education is the same as education for persons with disabilities or special education. Some of the teachers' primary concerns were implementing different teaching methods, choosing instructional content to meet the needs of all students, and helping from specialist teacher to handle students with special needs during instructional practice in the classroom.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Salamanca declaration in 1994 with a commitment to *Education for all* brought the idea of *Inclusive education* to the forefront of the International scenario. According to the declaration, inclusive education means the inclusion of all children in all class-room and out-of-class room activities, which implies that all children should have equal opportunities to reach their maximum potential and achievement, regardless of their origin and abilities or disabilities, and regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or linguistic differences (UNESCO, 1994; Stubbs, 2002; Frederickson and Cline, 2009).

Implementations of inclusive education at elementary schools have reported by only few (Sucuoglu, Akalin, and Pinar, 2014). Hence, questions on how far its implementation in Indonesia should get attention. Some researchers investigated implementation inclusive education in elementary schools, for example, Lee et al. (2010) and Berry, (2010) investigated implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools. Thurlow et al. (1984) and Golis (1995) investigated the instructional characteristics of inclusive classrooms. However,

there were few studies regarding to evaluation of the implementation of inclusive education in schools during instructional process.

The main problem of this study was to explore issues concerning with how to evaluate values of inclusive education happened in instructional processes at elementary schools. Therefore, this study was carried out using descriptive study and the purpose of the study was to measure index of inclusion of the inclusive classrooms in elementary schools and to investigate the teachers' attitude, perception, and concerns toward the inclusion of children with special needs in the regular education classrooms.

2 METHODS

This study used concurrent mixed methods to measure index of inclusion and to examine the teachers' attitude, perception, and concerns toward the inclusion of children with special needs. The participants of the study were ten elementary school teachers. There were five teachers of elementary private schools and five of those public elementary schools. They were six female and four male teachers

ranging in age from 35 to 55 years. The teachers were selected from ten elementary schools in Bandung City which were identified to actively implement inclusive education programs.

The data were collected through observation and focus group discussion. An observation guide developed by Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Booth, Ainscow, and Kinston, 2006) was used to measure index of inclusion in the process of instruction. The index of inclusion is a number showing how far inclusion practices occurred in instructional processes. To measure the index, the participants were asked to teach three different subjects in the inclusive classrooms. During teaching-learning process, the participants were rated by using the observation guide consisting of sixteen indicators. Each indicator was rated using a scale from 0 to 3. The score of 0 indicated less inclusiveness where the inclusive instruction was not at all identified. Meanwhile, the score of 3 showed greater inclusiveness where the inclusive instruction was clearly identified. The total score ranged from 0 to 48. In addition, a focus group discussion was used to investigate teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and concerns toward inclusion of students with special needs. There were ten questions were used in the discussion.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 is index of inclusion achieved in the instructional process of ten classes at elementary school. The data shows that the highest index of inclusion is 45.6 and the lowest is 28 with average 37.16 of ideal index 48. Index of inclusion is a number that shows the inclusiveness happened in an instructional process in the classroom. Therefore, a class that has a high index of inclusion indicates that the values of inclusiveness much happening in the instructional process in the classroom. Index of inclusion in the class 7 is higher than in other classes. It indicates that the values of inclusivity in class 7 appeared more often than in any other class. Inclusiveness occurring in an instructional process is highly dependent on the performance of a teacher who is doing instructional. Inclusiveness performed by teachers during the instructional process in a classroom can be influenced by many factors, such as attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education, the experience of teachers to deal with the children with special needs, the ability of teachers to manage classes and others.

One of the characteristics of the inclusive classroom is that teachers are able to manage a class effectively and all students can participate in the learning process. There are several key practices that were important contributors to meeting the needs of all students in inclusive school, for example, teachers have high expectations for behavior of all students and students with special needs are supported as a natural or ordinary part of support that is provided for all students (McLeskey, Waldron, and Redd, 2014).

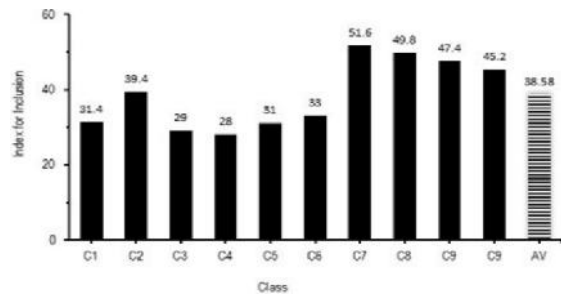


Figure 1: Index for inclusion for each class and average.

Figure 2 shows that index of inclusion of a class that has 2-3 students is 45.5 while a class that has 4-5 students is 35.5. Index of inclusion of classes with more number of children with special needs is lower than those of less number of children with special needs. It indicates that index of inclusion increased as a result of the number of children with special needs in a class decreased. Teachers will face some difficulties to manage students' behavior when there were many students with special needs as well as students without special needs in the classroom. Vaughn (1996) mentioned one of several aspects which might cause teachers difficult to improve inclusiveness was the large number of students with special needs in the class.

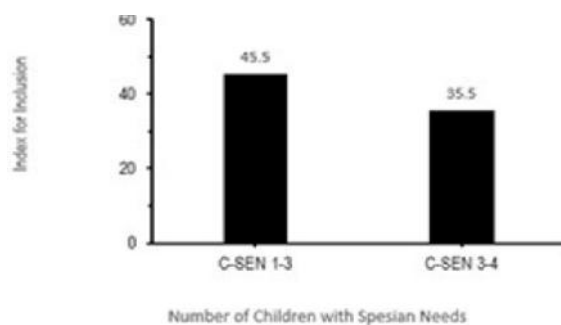


Figure 2: Index for inclusion as a function of number of students with special needs in each class.

Figure 3 shows index of inclusion of a class have same or less than 25 students is 45.4 while a class that has 25 students or more is 29.85. This data reveals that a class with more students cause inclusion index becomes lesser. In the classes having much number of students, the main teachers of inclusive classroom are not able to pay attention to the regular students as well as students with special needs optimally. According to Odongo and Davidson (2016) there were some important issues identified in their study regarding large class sizes, teacher training, student needs and resources are particularly important for inclusive practices to be successful.

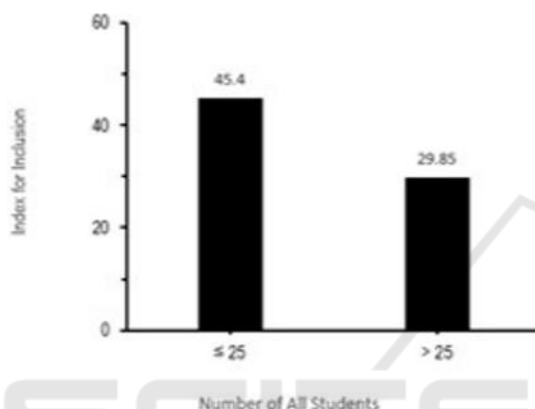


Figure 3. Index for inclusion as a function of total number of students in each class.

Figure 4 shows index of inclusion of a class that have teacher assistant more than 3, 3, and 1 to 2 is 45.6, 39.4, and 32.56 respectively. It indicates that the existing of the teacher assistant in the inclusive class could increase inclusion index. It should be noted that inclusive education would best be achieved if appropriate supports were available to assist the teachers and learners in inclusive rooms (Kristensen, Omagor-Lican, and Onen, 2003; Dupoux, Wolman, and Estrada, 2005). Collaboration between the mainstream and the special education teachers is important and that there should be a clear guideline on the implementation of inclusive education. When implementing inclusive education in regular classrooms, teachers are confronted with various problems that require many types of support. Teacher assistant or specialist teacher, resource teachers and resource rooms are one emerging form of support services in regular schools (Xiaoli and Olli-Pekka, 2015).

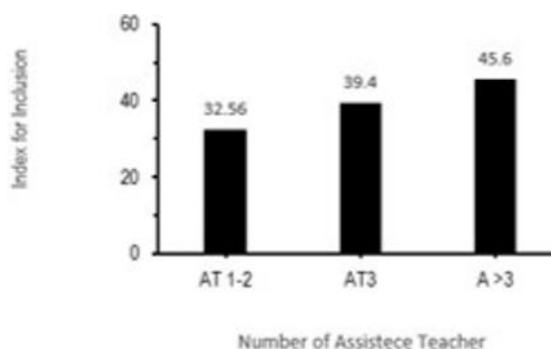


Figure 4. Index for inclusion as a function of number of teacher assistant in each class.

In general, the teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education. It is believed that teachers and their attitudes toward inclusion are very important variables in the implementation of successful inclusive practices (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Parasuram, 2006). Teachers who have favorable attitudes toward inclusion generally believe that students with disabilities belong in general education classrooms, that they can learn there, and that the teachers have confidence in their abilities to teach students with disabilities (Berry, 2010).

In general, an elementary school teacher has perception that inclusive education is the same as education for persons with disabilities or special education. Actually, inclusive education was the education that providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non formal educational settings (UNESCO, 2003). It indicated that achievement of an inclusive education system is a major challenge facing countries throughout the world (Meynert, 2014; Elton-Chalcraft, Cammack, and Harrison, 2016).

The data shows some of the teachers' primary concerns were implementing different teaching methods, choosing instructional content to meet the needs of all students, and helping from specialist teacher to handle students with special needs during instructional practice in the classroom. In the inclusive teaching-learning practices, most of regular teachers face challenges with respect to the diversity of characteristics, abilities, and learning needs of the students, because they do not have competence to handle students with special needs. It believed that inclusion is more likely to be successful when the class teacher takes a central role in the teaching-learning process. In addition, the outcomes of inclusion are strongly influenced by the ways in which the specialist teacher works together with the class teacher (Sam Fox and Davis, 2004).

In many countries, there is an increasing educational trend towards full inclusion, meaning that every child, disabled or not, should be taught in a regular classroom. The need to provide learning environments that respond to individual differences has been a longstanding concern. Index of inclusion is one way to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education in schools during instructional process. The present study evaluated the inclusive index using 18 observational items developed by Ainscow so that there were some inclusivity values during the teaching-learning process could not be revealed. Additional research is needed to develop observational items of the inclusive index. Moreover, future investigation should use comprehensive observational item more suitable with the condition of teaching learning in Indonesia.

4 CONCLUSION

Indexes of inclusion achieved by the elementary schools amounting to 38.58, whereas ideal inclusion index is 48. It shows that achievement of index of inclusion in the instructional practice can be influenced by number of student with special needs, total number of students, number of teacher assistant, and teachers' experience in attending training on treat children with special needs. In general, the elementary teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education and they agreed that inclusive education should be implemented in the elementary schools. Some of the teachers' primary concerns were implementing different teaching methods, choosing instructional content to meet the needs of all students, and helping from specialist teacher to handle students with special needs during instructional practice in the classroom.

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