



PRACTISING INCLUSION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEARNING PROCESS: AN EVALUATION STUDY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to evaluate the practice of inclusive education during the learning process within the elementary school. The practice of inclusive education was evaluated by means of inclusion index that consisted of 18 indicators with 54 as the ideal score; the index was adapted from that of Booth and Ainscow. The inclusion index was attained by observing the learning process in the classroom. In addition, the researcher also analyzed the teachers' opinion regarding the inclusive education and the process of accepting the students with special needs in the schools. The study was conducted to 10 classrooms in 4 elementary schools within the region of Banjarmasin city. The results of the study showed that the inclusive index had been equal to 38.58. The teachers' understanding regarding the inclusive education was focused on the placement of students with special needs in the regular schools and, in general, the acceptance of students with special needs in the schools had not been accompanied by a systematic plan in relation to the implementation of inclusive education.

Keyword: inclusive education, inclusion indeks, learning process, elementary school

Introduction

Theoretically, inclusion is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of unifying the diverse students, families, educators and society members in order to establish schools and other social institutions that should be based on the sense of respect, acceptance and belonging. Inclusion strives to establish collaboration, support and protection among the society of educators that will be based on the provision of necessary service and accomodation as well as mutual respect and mutual learning regarding the difference of each other (Salend, 2005: p.6; Stubbs, 2002:p.40).

The inclusion education has been agreed by many countries, including Indonesia, to be implemented in order to battle the discriminative behaviors in the educational domain (UNESCO, 2003). The implementation of inclusive education has been based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights in 1989, the World Declaration on the Education For All in 1990, the Standard Regulations on the Equal Opportunity for the Different Abled People in 1993, the Salamanca Statement and the Action Framework on the Special Needs Education in 1994.

In Spain 1994, UNESCO in collaboration with the local government conducted a world conference on the special needs education. The conference was to expand the objectives of education for all by considering the necessary shift of fundamental policies in order to promote the inclusive education so that the schools might serve all children including the ones with special needs. The conference generated the Salamanca Statement regarding the principles, the policies and the practices of special needs education which will be explained in the following sections.

The conference reasserted the commitment toward the education for all and confirmed the education for the children, the adolescents and the adults with special needs as part of the general educational system. The conference also believed that each child had the fundamental right to attain education and should be given an opportunity to achieve and to maintain the normal level of knowledge. Each child has different learning characteristics, interests, capabilities and needs. The educational system and programs should be designed and be implemented by considering the diversity. The children with special needs should be given access to the general schools that should also accommodate the needs of the children.

Inclusion is viewed as a process that has been directed and that has responded to the existence of various learning participants' needs by increasing the participation in the learning process, the cultural activities and the community and by decreasing the exclusion within the education. Inclusion includes the change and the modification toward content, structure and strategy with accommodating all of the school-age children who become the responsibility of the regular education system as the main mission (UNESCO, 1994).

For the last several decades, the approach of inclusive education has been benefitted for the education of children with special needs (Biklen, 1992). The special education is to teach the children who, due to multiple reasons, have been unable to gain benefits from the typically presented curriculum (Williams, 1998).

Before the inclusive education has been introduced, there used to be a system called integrative education. In 1990s, the model of integrative education started to appear and then gained criticisms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1997). Although the term integrative education and inclusive education have been used interchangeably (Mariga & Pachaka, 1993), both the education for all and the Salamanca statement have articulated that the inclusive education is the best practice for the different-abled students. The inclusive education, as the opposite of integrative education, has focus on the overall change of school system.

The agreement and the commitment of the Republic of Indonesia government regarding the inclusive education has been actually manifested into the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 70 Year 2009 regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia (Depdiknas, 2009) and the government has striven to implement the inclusive education by means of multiple programs and activities in the Ministry of National Education and in the municipal/county educational offices. Multiple constraints and challenges in the implementation of inclusive education have been frequently reported namely the

misunderstanding on the concept of inclusive education, the inconsistent regulations or policies, the rigid educational system and the teachers' low awareness toward the inclusive education.

The implementation of inclusive education is influenced by multiple factors namely cultures, politics and human resources (Kwon, 2005). According to Booth & Ainscow (2002) the implementation of inclusive education might be evaluated by using an index called index for inclusion. Conceptually the index for inclusion is established on the three dimensions as follows: (1) the dimension of creating inclusive cultures; (2) the dimension of producing inclusive policies; and (3) the dimension of evolving inclusive practices. Each dimension consists of two sections. The dimension of creating inclusive cultures consists of two sections namely: (1) the section of building community; and (2) the section of establishing inclusive values. Then, the dimension of producing inclusive policies consists of two sections as well namely: (1) the section of developing setting for all; and (2) the section of organizing support for diversity. Last but not the least, the dimension of evolving inclusive practices consists of two sections namely: (1) the section of orchestrating play and learning; and (2) the section of mobilizing resources.

Inclusive education or schools with inclusive orientation is a very effective way in decreasing the discriminative behaviors, in making the society to be aware, in establishing an inclusive society and in providing educational opportunities for all. Furthermore, the inclusive education or the schools with inclusive orientation might prepare an effective education for all students and might increase the efficiency in terms of tuition and regular fee.

The implementation of inclusive education in the elementary school up to date has not been reported much. Therefore, the study is to evaluate the practice of inclusion in the elementary schools during the learning process within the classroom. In addition, the study is also to describe the teachers' opinion regarding the inclusive education, the acceptance of children with special needs in the schools and the adaptational activities that have been done in order to meet the special needs.

Method

The main object of the study was the learning process that occurred within the classroom from 4 elementary schools in the Banjarmasin City. Ten teachers (6 male teachers and 4 female teachers), consisting of 3 first-grade teachers, 4 third-grade teachers and 3 fourth-grade teachers, took participation in the study. In general they had been teaching in their schools for 6 years.

The data that had been gathered included: (1) index for inclusion; (2) teachers' opinion regarding the inclusive education; and (3) the process of admitting the children with special needs in the schools. The index for inclusion is the number that shows how far the inclusive practices have occurred within the learning process (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). The index or inclusion was attained by observing the teaching-learning process in 10 classrooms with 18 indicators. The observer was asked to see whether an indicator had occurred or not during the

learning process by selecting one of the following options in each statement: always, frequently, occasionally and never. If a statement had always occurred, then the score for the statement would be 3. Then, if a statement had frequently occurred, then the score for the statement would be 2. Next, if a statement had occasionally occurred, then the score for the statement would be 1. Last but not the least, if a statement had never occurred, then the score for the statement would be 0. Thereby, the ideal score for the index for inclusion would be 54. The observation was conducted by two people as the observer for three times in each classroom. The data regarding the teachers' opinion on the inclusive education and the process of admitting the students with special needs were attained from the interview session.

Results

Table 1

Number of Teachers, Overall Students and Students with Special Needs in 10 Classrooms from 4 Elementary Schools

Classroom	Number of Students with Special Needs	Type of Disability	Number of Overall Students	Number of Teachers
K-1	2	1 Learning Disability (LD) 1 Physical Disability	34	1
K-2	2	1 Learning Disability (LD) 1 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	33	2
K-3	2	1 Attention Deficit and Hiperactivity Disorder (ADHD) 1 Learning Disability (LD)	46	3
K-4	2	1 Intellectual Disability (LD) 1 Learning Disability (LD)	34	2
K-5	1	1 Learning Disability (LD)	35	1
K-6	1	1 Attention Deficit and Hiperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	20	1
K-7	4	2 Intellectual Disability (ID) 1 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	22	6

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1 Learning Disability (LD)				
2 Autism Spectrum Disorder				
K-8	3	(ASD)	20	3
1 Learning Disability (LD)				
2 Autism Spectrum Disorder				
K-9	2	(ASD)	20	4
1 Intellectual Disability (ID)				
K-10	2	1 Attention Deficit and Hiperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	25	4

Within the classrooms of the schools that implemented the inclusive education, it had been apparent that the number of the students with special needs had a tendency to be around 1 to 4 people with more than 1 teachers who consisted of 1 classroom teacher and 1 special or assisting teacher. The highest number of teacher was 6 in which 1 main teacher was assisted by 5 special teachers in relation to the specific needs of each student. The students with learning disability (LD) were mostly found in addition to the ASD students and the vision-impaired students. Such phenomena had been in accordance with the finding of the previous study which stated that the children who suffered from LD and ASD were frequently invisible (Golis, 1995); as a result, their special needs were not identified until they attended the learning process. Such event most of the times caused the schools to accept the students with special needs unconsciously at the beginning. However, the situation might change due to the more positive motivation.

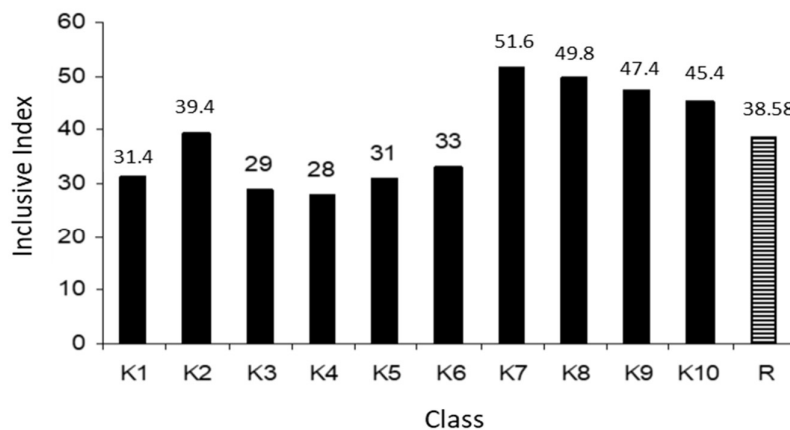


Figure 1. The Average Index for Inclusion and the Index for Inclusion in Each Class

Index for inclusion is a figure that shows how far the inclusive values have been identified within the learning process and the ideal index for inclusion for the study would be 54. Figure 1 showed that the highest index for inclusion was equal to 51.60 and the lowest index for inclusion was equal to 28.00 with the average index for inclusion was equal to 38.58. The figure showed that the inclusiveness during the learning process that had been attained by the elementary schools that implemented the inclusive education in overall had not been optimal. According to the data, the highest index for inclusion was generated in the school which number of students was 22 people, number students with special needs was 4 people and number of teacher was 6 people. The figure indicated that the sufficient number of teacher became the main factor in achieving the high index for inclusion.

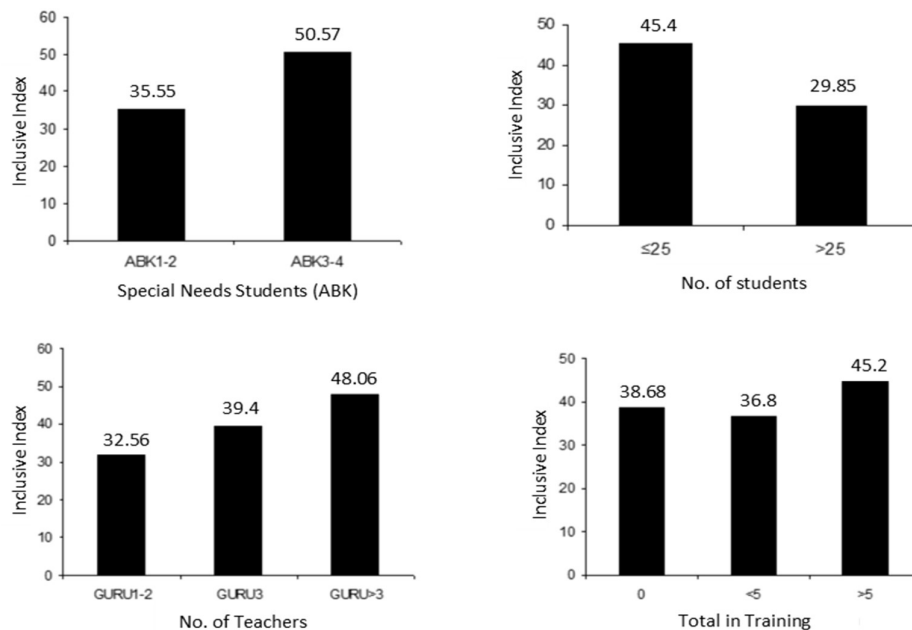


Figure 2. Index for Inclusion in Relation to the Number of Students with Special Needs, Number of Overall Students, Number of Teachers and Teachers' Experiences in Attending Training Programs

Figure 2 described the relationship between the index for inclusion that had been attained in the classrooms and the number of students with special needs, the number of overall students in the classrooms, the number of teachers and the teachers' experiences in attending the training programs regarding the treatment for the students with special needs. The index for inclusion in the classrooms that had more students with special needs was higher than those of less students with special needs. The highest index for inclusion was attained in the classroom that had higher number of teachers and more teachers who had attended the training programs. The figure indicated that the number of students with special needs, the number of overall students, the number of teachers and the participation in training program affected the achievement of the index for inclusion on the learning process within the classroom.

In order to measure the inclusive practice on the learning process within the classroom, the researcher made use of observation manual that consisted of 18 indicators. The indicators were as follows: (1) The teacher avoids racist, sexist and other discriminative words; (2) The teaching is adjusted to the diversity of students' experiences; (3) The teacher provides flexibility in implementing the teaching methods; (4) The student has an opportunity to take note on his or her work in multiple ways; (5) The teacher has relationship with the local health authority; (6) The curriculum material reflects the background and the experience of all students; (7) The teacher is aware of the student's efforts; (8) The classroom environment, the classroom display and other sources assist the independent learning; (9) The student learns in his or her workgroup; (10) The student helps each other whenever there is a problem instead of making the problem worse; (11) The student with special needs is given sufficient time allocation in accomplishing his or her job; (12) The student is involved in arranging the classroom's regulations; (13) Each student is encouraged to take part in the extracurricular activities; (14) The teacher collaborates with the special teacher; (15) The teachers have a discussion if they have teaching problems with the students with special needs; (16) The schools collaborate to each other in increasing the inclusive practice; (17) All teachers were involved in the socialization of inclusive education; and (18) Teachers have multiple assessment instruments for the students.

The achievement distribution for each indicator during the learning process within the 10 classrooms would be displayed in the following Figure 3:

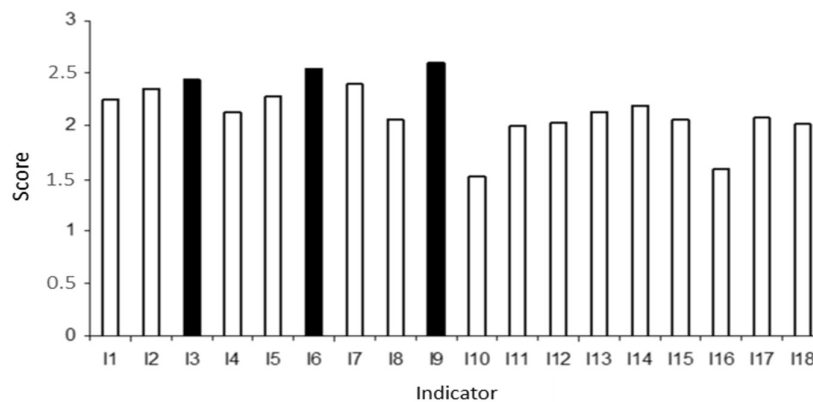


Figure 3. The Index for Inclusion in Each Indicator within the Learning Process in the Classrooms

Figure 3 showed that the indicator number 3 (The teacher provides flexibility in implementing the teaching methods), number 6 (The curriculum material reflects the background and the experience of all students) and number 9 (The student learns in his or her workgroup) had the highest score. On the other hand, the indicator number 10 (The student helps each other whenever there is a problem instead of making the problem worse) and number 16 (The schools collaborate to each other in increasing the inclusive practice) had the lowest score.

Teachers' Opinion Regarding the Inclusive Education

The knowledge regarding the inclusive education that the teachers gained in general came from the training programs that had been held by the government. In addition, several teachers learned about the inclusive education alone from multiple reading materials. The inclusive education had been understood variously and in general the inclusive education was considered equal to the integrative education. Furthermore, most of the time the teachers also considered that the inclusive education had been related to the placement of students with special needs in the regular schools. The teachers in general agreed that the inclusive education should be implemented in the schools although some other teachers denied the idea.

The factors that might be predicted to influence the agreement and the disagreement toward the implementation of inclusive education was the teachers' experience in treatment the students with special needs directly and the teachers' knowledge regarding the students with special needs. In addition, the consideration regarding the type and the level of the students' impairment as well as the readiness of the supporting system such as the existence of the special staff, the special equipment, the governing education system and the related regulations might also influence the acceptance or the denial toward the inclusive education.

The Acceptance of Students with Special Needs in the Schools

The acceptance of students with special needs in the schools initially occurred in a natural and unplanned manner. Some of the students with special needs had not been detected at the beginning. After the teachers found that they were different from the other students (for example: having low academic achievements, exposing awkward behaviors and having low development), the schools recommend these students to be transferred to the special schools. There were various reasons; however, the teachers' incapability to handle the students with special needs had been the frequently articulated reason.

The initiative to enroll the students with special needs to the general schools usually came up from the parent. The parents' pressure and the empathy toward the parents' difficulty had also been the schools' consideration in accepting the students with special needs. In addition, the mercy had been made as an excuse in accepting the students with special needs in the regular school as well. Such reasons (that had been considered as being less fundamental) influenced the schools' point of view in treatment the students with special needs whereas in general the schools' treatment toward the students with special needs had not been in accordance with the ideal principles of inclusive education.

Discussions

In general the teachers in the elementary schools agreed that the inclusive education should be implemented in the schools with different reasons and motivations. The acceptance toward the inclusive education was not only merely determined by their understanding toward the concept and the principles of inclusive education but was also based on the other values that they believed such as the religious values and the cultures as well as the traditions that they adopted in the schools.

Although the inclusive education had not been fully implemented, most of the teachers had experiences of teaching the students with special needs in the regular schools. The experiences were attained unintentionally and unplanned and the experiences were natural. Such experiences were very potential to be maintained and to be developed professionally in order that the teachers would teach with full awareness and more positive and stronger motivation.

The schools' reasons and motivations in accepting the students with special needs were different; however, in general the schools accepted these students due to their unawareness. The initiative to accept these students came from the parents or the external parties and then the school provided a positive response to their initiative. Such mechanism of acceptance was not an ideal one; however, the mechanism of acceptance would be a good aspect that should be maintained and be developed.

If in a classroom there were several students with special needs, then the most ideal situation in the classroom would be the classroom teacher and the special teacher, namely the one who had the ability to handle these students, should be present. The special teacher should be the one who had special education background and who might serve as a consultant for the classroom teacher in the regular classroom. In the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 70 Year 2009, it has been written that the schools that implements the inclusive education should be supported by the specially-assisting teachers. The spirit has been in accordance with the educational policies in the European and American countries that demands each school that has students with special needs should provide special teachers. Recently in Indonesia there has been a tendency that the schools that have students with special needs start providing the special teachers. The special teachers are generally provided by the schools under the financial assistance from the parents.

In general, the index for inclusion in the elementary schools that implemented the inclusive education had not been ideal. The number of teachers who taught in the classrooms influenced the achievement of the index for inclusion, in which the greater number of teachers caused the higher index for inclusion. In addition, the high index for inclusion also occurred in the classrooms which teachers had attended training programs regarding the treatment of students with special needs. Looking at such phenomena, it might be explained that the greater number of teachers in the classrooms enabled the teachers to provide special attention to the students with special needs so that these students might take participation in the learning activities optimally.

The classrooms who had teachers with more experiences of attending the training programs regarding the treatment of students with special needs had higher index for inclusion. The higher index for inclusion indicated that the training activities provided positive impact toward the teachers in implementing the principles of inclusive education within the learning process in the classrooms. The training effectiveness in changing an individual's attitude might be explained by means of changes on an individual's attitude because attitude has three aspects namely the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotoric aspect. By giving the appropriate information, an individual's knowledge would be true and, in turn, with the true knowledge an

individual would commit a true action. Based on the argument, it might be predicted that the teachers who attended the inclusive education training would implement the right principles of inclusive education.

The indicators that contained in the index for inclusion consisted of 18 items. The indicator that attained the highest score was related to the curriculum material that reflected the background and the experience of all students. In the inclusive schools, the curriculum flexibility had been the main principle and the curriculum flexibility might be pursued by means of several ways namely: (1) duplication, namely to provide opportunities for the students with special needs to attend the curriculum that had been made equal to the other learning participants; (2) adaptation, namely to adjust the curriculum materials to the needs and the constraints of students with special needs; (3) substitution, namely to refer to the curriculum that had been designed in a specific manner; (4) omission, namely to omit certain curriculum because the curriculum might not be implemented toward the students with special needs; and (5) extension, namely to make certain that the curriculum that had been made should provide opportunities for the material development or the material expansion in order that the students with special needs might optimize their potentials.

Conclusion

In general the teachers in the elementary schools accepted and agreed on the implementation of inclusive education. However, they had different reasons and motivations in accepting the inclusive education. The acceptance of inclusive education was not only merely determined by their understanding toward the concept of inclusive education but was also based on the other values such as the religious, the cultural and the traditional values that they adopted.

The inclusive education had not been fully implemented in the elementary schools. However, there had been many teachers who had experiences in teaching the students with special needs in the regular schools. These experiences were attained unintentionally. In general the schools accepted the students with special needs under various reasons and motivations. The reason was that the schools did not identify whether the newly accepted students belonged to the students with special needs or not. The initiative of accepting these students usually came from the parents or the external parties and the schools then provided a positive response toward the acceptance. Such process of accepting the students was not an ideal one but it might serve as a good capital that should be maintained and be developed.

The number of students with special needs in the inclusive elementary schools were various, starting from 1 to 4 people, and most classes were filled with 2 students with special needs. On the other hand, the lowest overall number of students was 20 people and the highest overall number of students was 46 people. In general, the classrooms who had students with special needs were under the control of more than one teachers; usually, one teacher would serve as the main teacher or the classroom teacher and the other teacher would serve as the assisting teacher or the special teacher. However, in some other classrooms the number of teacher were only one person. The average index for inclusion that had been attained by the elementary schools was 38.58, while the ideal index for inclusion should be 54. The high index for

inclusion was attained by the classrooms that had more than one teacher, the classrooms which teachers attended the training regarding the treatment of students with special needs and the classrooms which number of overall students were lower.

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