COMPETENCY IMPROVEMENT OF INCLUSIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS THROUGH THE MENTORING PROGRAM

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Abstract: Didactic lectures are a widely accepted method of teaching and learning, especially for government employees when the majority had formal schooling more than years ago. Also, due to time constraints and a large amount of material to be covered, providing feedback for examination takers before and after lectures can help inform lecturers about the level of knowledge gained by them and improve the effectiveness of their lectures in the next waves of the CCC-CGCs joint free civil service review program. The study aims to determine the extent of knowledge gained by civil service examination takers through pre- and post-test-based examinations. The original 303 registered participants in the program were deduced to 261 who completed the 8-Saturday Review program and voluntarily took the post-test examination. Parallel tests were given at the beginning and end of the program to assess the effectiveness of the didactic lecture. There is a significant increase in scores after the review session at p≤0.000, it meant that the program helped them increase their receptive power through the pre-and post-lecture knowledge. However, this percentage of scores was not reaching yet the passing score defined by the civil service commission with a mean score of 54% against the national passing standard percentage of 80%. The study looked also at attendance proportion with the p>0.05(p=0.392; n=261) and hence this factor was not related to the scores they got. Results were analyzed through paired t-test and Pearson correlation along with the Shapiro-Wilk p-value of 0.934. This joint project is of great help to the prospective takers of the civil service commission examination and recommended continuing the project initiated by the City College of Calamba (CCC) supported by the City Government of Calamba (CGC).

Keywords: pre-and post-test, civil service review, local government unit, community extension.

Introduction

Improving the quality of inclusive education in Indonesia must be supported by all education stakeholders to achieve the educational goals that the government has set (Rasmitadila, Megan Asri, & Reza, 2022). However, deep implementation, there are still many elementary schools - which still need to be inclusive schools (but accept students with special needs) or as models of inclusive schools - it is challenging to implement inclusive education following government policies. The results of previous research studies revealed several problems regarding the implementation of inclusive education, especially in elementary schools in Indonesia, such as the number of schools that did not receive assistance from the government in implementing inclusive education programs (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002); teachers rarely receive training that can improve competence as inclusive teachers even though the teacher's background is from a teacher education university (Rasmitadila, Megan Asri, Reza, et al., 2022); schools do not yet have collaboration with other parties (universities, NGOs, psychologists) in

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supporting the implementation of inclusive education so that schools feel that all obligations of inclusive education are only borne by the schools themselves; there is a discrepancy between theory and practice that is obtained by prospective inclusive teachers at universities (teachership) when they have to teach in inclusive elementary schools; schools do not yet have facilities and infrastructure, nor the availability of units that can assist teachers in solving problems in inclusive classes, both related to curriculum, student behavior and assessment.

The school or government needs help to overcome some of the problems that occur in inclusive primary schools (Anđić et al., 2022; Zwane & Malale, 2018). Of course, there must be involvement from other parties, such as universities, especially those that organize elementary school teacher education, producing prospective teachers who will teach at the inclusive school. Good cooperation between universities and elementary schools providing inclusive education will positively impact the development of inclusive education (Gokdere, 2012; Mitchell, 2014). Collaboration and relations between universities and schools continue the inclusive prospective teacher development program so that they have quality competencies through quality training programs and mentoring programs.

A mentoring program conducted by the university for inclusive elementary schools is a program that is expected to help inclusive primary schools in solving problems that have been faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms (Humaira et al., 2021; Lesar et al., 1997). Mentoring program implemented in teacher training at school Inclusiveness is also expected to increase teacher competence. Several training materials are very relevant to teachers' problems, such as handling special needs students, learning in inclusive classes, curricula, and assessments are needed by teachers in inclusive classes. So that there are changes in learning in inclusive courses for the better. This research explores teachers' opinions on increasing teacher competence in implementing mentoring programs for inclusive elementary schools involving universities.

Methodology

This research is a simple research design (SRD) yang used by a researcher to reflect on findings in the field by using theory to solve the problems encountered (Bungin, 2020). The research procedure of SRD was carried out with five main steps, namely (1) Selecting the social context and determining the research question (Social context and research question); (2) Conducting a literature review (Literature Review); (3) Conducting research methods and collecting data (Research methods and data collection); (4) Analyzing data (Data Analysis); (5) Reporting research results (Reporting).

Participant

Participants in this study consisted of 100 elementary school teachers as regular teachers (RT) who taught in inclusive schools and attended inclusive teacher training in the mentoring program organized by the university in the Bogor district, West Java, Indonesia. All participants were classroom teachers consisting of Females (N= 84) and Males (N=16), with 1-5 years of teaching experience (N= 18), 6-10 years (N=12), and over 11 years (N=70). Meanwhile, the respective education levels for Diploma (N=2), Bachelor (N=97), and Master (N=1)

Data Collection

The data was collected through a survey of 100 elementary school teachers who taught inclusive schools and attended inclusive teacher training in the mentoring program organized by the university. Teachers received training in materials regarding identification and assessment, curriculum, and instruction in inclusive classes, including making individual educational programs and evaluations for three days. On the first day, RTs underwent a pre-test to find out the competencies mastered by teachers regarding inclusive education, and after that received comprehensive training on inclusive education from 3 mentors from the university. On the third day of RT, carry out a post-test to determine the increase in competency that the households gained during the training. Apart from questions hand given to the RTs, the mentor also gave a questionnaire in the Google Form via the link provided by the mentor, which contained the perceptions of the RTs related to the implementation of the mentoring program, especially regarding increasing the competencies that the RTs had obtained during the training which was part of the university assistance program for inclusive elementary schools. The main question given to the RTs is what the RTs think about the competencies they have acquired during the training. The questions are in essay sentences and are open so RTs can give their opinions openly. RT immediately sends the answer directly on the link provided before.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used thematic analysis techniques to explore the opinion of the RTs. The data generated from each participant in responses were made in several stages. In the first stage, codes (keywords) representing participant statements are made so they do not overlap. The second stage is the categorization of the codes that have been made. With the researcher's large data, coding and categorization are more accessible for the Nvivo 12 application. All interview data were entered and given codes and categories. Researchers analyze each categorization to allow for the integration or unification of codes to be more effective. This inductive technique identifies themes expressed by participants in response to research questions (Liu, 2011).
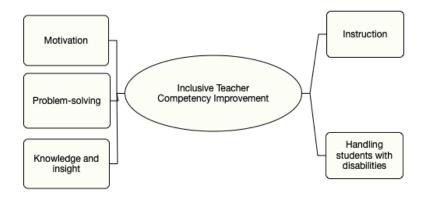

Figure 1: Results of data analysis (with Nvivo)

Result and Discussion

The results of the data analysis consisted of five main themes: motivation, instruction, problem-solving, handling students with disabilities, and knowledge and insight.

Motivation

The training provided to RTs regarding inclusive education has encouraged and motivated RTs to be able to provide the best service to all students in inclusive classes, including students with disability. RT stated that training with various training materials provided by mentors, which has been the main difficulty in dealing with students with special needs, considerably opened their horizons and made them increase motivation in handling students with special needs and improving the quality of learning in inclusive classes. Several RTs expressed this opinion:

> "This training motivated me to be able to handle students with special needs, which so far it is difficult to practice in inclusive classes."

> "With this training, I gain insight and am motivated to get to know students better in improving school learning."

Motivation is a tremendous encouragement for teachers in inclusive classes to provide the best service to all students (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). The teacher's internal motivation is like the desire to give the best service, both in academic and non-academic aspects. This is the basis for teachers to achieve learning in inclusive classrooms. On the academic aspect, teachers must be able to plan learning that can fulfill all the needs of all students in a dynamic class, changing and requiring special handling (Pangrazi & Beighle, 2019). Instructional objectives with targets that have been set based on the characteristics of each student, with an effective learning design the teacher must be able to achieve so that the learning objectives are achieved (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). For this reason, motivation from oneself and colleagues is needed to implement learning in inclusive classes (Oleson, 2020; Zee & Koomen, 2016). From a non-academic aspect, motivation from colleagues, cooperation and collaboration, and constructive discussion in solving inclusive problems is a strong impetus for teachers to achieve learning goals.

Instruction

In instruction, RT argues that they gain knowledge and increase competence through training, especially in handling students' needs, specifically in learning. So far, RTs implementing learning in inclusive classes tend to use the same learning methods as non-disabilities (SND) and students with disabilities (SWD). This condition occurs because the RT does not understand the characteristics of SWD, so it impacts learning carried out in class. This training opens RT's insight in order to carry out learning better again in the inclusive class. Some of the RT's opinions are related to learning in inclusive classrooms. The things that can be obtained through the training include:

> " I can know how to provide learning to children with special needs in an inclusive class."

> " I can improve learning competence because I know about students with special needs, especially when implementing learning in inclusive classes."

The success of learning in an inclusive classroom depends on the learning strategy designed by the teacher (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Yilmaz & Yeganeh, 2021). The learning strategy is a learning set designed by the teacher to achieve the learning objectives: learning steps, instructional methods, instructional media, time, and instructional evaluation. Learning in an inclusive classroom is very complex. It requires attention specifically because of the diversity and differences in learning styles

and the needs of students, especially SWD, who require special methods in their learning (Lindsay et al., 2014). The teacher must be able to understand the characteristics of students so that teachers use effective instructional strategies and that learning objectives can be achieved optimally.

Problem-solving

The RTs believed that the training in this mentoring program could provide an overview of lasting problem-solving. This was found by RT in execution learning in the inclusive class. The material provided by the mentor has opened the minds of RTs in solving problems that RT always faced, such as handling SWD, selecting effective learning methods, and teaching materials that suit all students' needs. During the training, the material provided opened up all the information the RTs had so far needed to deal with problems in an inclusive class. All the training materials can help them solve problems, and they will apply materials and methods handling all students during the implementation of learning in the classroom inclusively takes place. Opinions submitted by RT below:

> "I came to know, with the material provided by the Mentor, it is closely related to the difficulty in dealing with students, especially special students in inclusive classes."

The difficulties households face in inclusive classes have been challenging to solve systematically and effectively (Ferri et al., 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). The problems faced by RTs, with minimal abilities and competencies due to different backgrounds or fields of science different, but having to deal with all the characteristics of students causes all the teacher's difficulties not to be easily solved completely. Teachers' difficulties in dynamic, inclusive classrooms need fast and targeted problem-solving (Reicher, 2010; Wilson & Blednick, 2011). The condition that causes this is a lack of cooperation between the school with stakeholder others such as psychologists, education offices, and even universities that provide special services in handling students, as well as universities that produce research in inclusive education so that the difficulties faced by teachers no easy to solve (Block et al., 2014; Forman et al., 2013). For this reason, there needs to be a collaboration between schools and other parties, especially with universities as one of the providers of research results that can help schools, especially teachers in inclusive classes, so that the goals and needs of students can be achieved optimally.

Handling students with disabilities

One of the most essential training materials for RTs is identifying and assessing students in inclusive classes. RTs believe that this material is needed by RTs because the difficulties that are also often faced by RTs are not being able to understand the characteristics of students with special needs. A different RT educational background, and not from special program education or special education, as well as the absence of a way to identify students with specific needs, makes it difficult for RTs to provide full service to students, especially students with special needs. With the training in this mentoring program, RTs gain knowledge and direct practice on identifying students using instruments to understand and get information related to the characteristics and tendencies that students are SWDs. One RT explained this opinion:

> "By participating in inclusive training workshops, we as class teachers can already understand and differentiate what children with special needs mean and how to handle it in class, especially through student identification."

Student identification material is one of the essential materials in training because it can provide understanding and knowledge to the RT about the characteristics of students and their impact on services to students, especially students with special needs. Suppose RT gets implement identification activities for students. In that case, the initial screening of SWD indications can be carried out so that learning planning, which teachers must prepare for learning, is more transparent and accessible. RT can make an individual education plan (IEP) and planned. Planning learning is essential for teachers so that the implementation of learning in inclusive classes can take place well and achieve learning objectives following the needs of all students, including SWD (de Jager, 2013; Katz, 2015).

Knowledge and sight

The training provided to RTs through a mentoring program by the university provides many new experiences for RTs. In addition, training activities have provided additional positive knowledge and insights, especially training materials and practices provided to RTs. RT think that by following this training, knowledge, and outlook, they increase significantly inclusive education in detail, learning, curriculum, assessment, and handling of SWDs. RT also believes this training activity can improve their competency through knowledge and insights they will practice in their classes. RT's opinion regarding this is as follows:

> "With this workshop, I feel that I have gained more knowledge and insight on matters relating to inclusive education, which of course, has an impact on my competence as an inclusive teacher delegated by the school where I teach, which has several very diverse students with special needs."

Training for inclusive teachers is essential to do so. Knowledge and teachers' insights related to inclusive education can constantly be improved, especially the results of the latest research conducted by the university (Bovellan, 2014; Rapanta et al., 2020). In training, results need to be disseminated study, so that the teachers can practice it in class as part of solving problems in the inclusive class. Instructional methods and instructional media generated by researchers' universities must always be informed to inclusive teachers through intentional training (Dube, 2020; Thomas et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This study aims to determine the perceptions of regular teachers related to increasing the competence of teachers who carry out mentoring programs through university training. The training program given to teachers has increased the competence of regular teachers who teach in inclusive classes. It must be carried out continuously and sustainably so that teacher competence can increase and they can solve problems in an inclusive, dynamic, inclusive class. This research is expected to be the basis for all education stakeholders to collaborate as partners to improve the quality of inclusive education.

Acknowledgement

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