

Measuring Belief-Based Perception towards Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Education

A Salim, Gunarhadi*, M F Hidayatullah

Department of Special Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia

Received December 9, 2019; Revised February 10, 2020; Accepted February 25, 2020

Copyright©2020 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Abstract Inclusive education is proven to be effective once people in the society hold positive perception on the human right of children with special needs (CSN). Inclusion begins firstly from the belief that all religions admit the basic human right. However, many people hold different perception about inclusion of CSN. This research is intended to (1) describe the teachers and school staffs' degree of knowledge on inclusive education for CSN, (2) measure the teachers' and school staffs' attitude towards inclusive education. This research was an exploratory study involving 126 out of 260 (47,4%) teachers and education staffs representing seven districts/cities in Central Java, Indonesia taken by multi stage random sampling. The data was collected by means of questionnaires, and analyzed descriptively in quantitative measures. The result shows that: 1). 40% of the school staffs are unfamiliar with the concept of disability and inclusion, 2). 55.5% lack adequate concerns on the right of children with special needs (CSN) to be in inclusive schools, The research concludes that many teachers and educational staffs in the Ministry of Religion have already positively virtuous perception that they are obliged to promote the human right of CSN, but do not implement in the real practice in inclusive school settings.

Keywords Children with Special Needs, Belief, Inclusion, Teachers and Staff

1. Introduction

The practice of inclusive education has been running for a long in Indonesia, even though it was first legally launched in 2003 under the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education No.380/C.66/MN/2003. This act is even strengthened by the issuance of Inclusive Education Act No.70/2009 under the Ministry of Education. This policy brings up a strong implication that inclusive

education gets special attention from the government which is delegated to schools to accommodate all children with special needs (CSN) remaining in the community. Upon the implementation of this act, there are more and more inclusive schools established all over Indonesia. The surprising fact indicates 173 Special Schools with a number of 554 CSN in the Central Java province. It means, there are 3 CSN on average included in one school under the Ministry of Religion. However, within nearly two decades since the inclusion act was firstly declared in 2003, the Ministry of Religion has not made emerging significant movement of inclusive education as it is expected. In fact, the results of most surveys in the Ministry of Religion found that teachers and staffs indicated positive attitude towards students with disability [1]. A previous research even found that 44.5% of teachers refused mainstream of CSN. It seems, CSN's human right to education has not been fully cautioned as the important part of school responsibility. Such empirical studies call us on considering more evidently on the back ground why a lot of teachers in this ministry refused to accept children with disabilities in their regular schools. It is believed, as a matter of fact, that inclusive education is the solution to such a problem.

One thing to be noted here is that the success of inclusive education is much justified by several factors. One of the dominant factors is the teachers' perception towards the policy of inclusive education. Positive perception will determine the degree of willingness to support the object accordingly. In relation to inclusive education, positive perception on the policy will accordingly affect positive support on its implementation, and so is the vice versa [2]. All these, unfortunately, take place in the environment of Ministry of Education and Culture. In the premises of Ministry of Religion, unlikely, perception towards inclusive education policy is not that much.

Whether someone has positive or negative perception on the policy on inclusive education depends on knowledge and attitude towards CSN. The general purpose of the research is to see the degree of knowledge and attitude of the

teachers and staffs more closely on CSN. In addition, it measures the impact of educational services on regular schools under the Ministry of Religion where inclusion is the basic concern of given human right. To be specific, this research aims at revealing how teachers and staffs view the existence of students with disabilities in their schools. More importantly, the research aims at the response as how they perceive the policy on inclusive education as a means of fulfilling the right of disabilities to education in schools under the Ministry of Religion in particular. Lastly, the research is focused on measuring the knowledgeable impacts of Ministry of Religion on the inclusive educational service to CSN.

1.1. Literature Review

The Republic of Indonesia guarantees the life sustainability of its citizens including those with disabilities. It includes persons with disabilities having the same juristic and the same human rights as Indonesian citizens as an inseparable part of Indonesian society. Most people with disabilities in Indonesia live in vulnerable, underdeveloped, and / or poor conditions due to the existence of restrictions, obstacles, difficulties, and the limitation in term of the rights of persons with disabilities [3]. One of the limitations of the rights of persons with disabilities occurs in the education sector. Education for persons with disabilities is provided in two types of education units, namely in general education units and in special education in special schools [4] managed by both the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion.

The total number of schools from Kindergarten to Senior High School levels in Indonesia is 374,704, from which 297,368 are managed by Ministry of Education and Culture, and the rest (77.336) are under the supervision of Ministry of Religion [3]. Unfortunately, not all these public schools in these two ministries are giving education services to those with disabilities [5]. A research on schools within the Ministry of Religion found that 55.56% of teachers keep the assumption that inclusive education should only be managed under the Ministry of Education and Culture. Hence, it make sense that 97.78% of teachers have low skills of instruction for students with disabilities [5]

In addition to instructional skills, an acceptance and rejection on the policy on inclusive education among the teachers and staffs is another important part of this research. The degree of acceptance or rejection depends mostly on the angle in perceiving the policy. Perceiving means the process of interpreting, organizing and giving meaning to the stimulus object; in this case of inclusive education coming from the environment [6][7]. There are two important elements of perception to a stimulus, namely interpretation and organizers [8]. Interpretation is an attempt to understand the information obtained. Perceptions can be of visual, auditory, smelling as well as tasting sensories [9]. In this context of inclusive education,

policy becomes the center of awareness among the teachers and staffs to understand the importance and the implication to the practice of inclusive education.

Ideally, inclusive education should be understood by all members of the school community such as teachers, principals, and all other staff to be responsible for how CSN is in schools so that each of them develops on the basis of their own potential and [6][7]. Inclusive education is not just a matter of placing CSN in a regular class to learn together with the non-CSN peers [6] [10]. Rather, it means giving opportunity as such to enable them to perform their best of actualization [11].

The success of inclusive education is indicated by the instructional skills of the teachers in the classroom settings and the awareness of accepting the students with disabilities. Both the instructional skills and awareness can only be measured by the extent of responsibility which is predominantly determined by the perception among the teachers and other school human resources. This research is focused on measuring the degree of perception among the teachers and staffs in valuing the existence of disabilities and the policy on inclusive education in the Ministry of Religion where inclusion is the primarily given human right.

2. Method of Research

2.1. Design

This study was an exploratory research approach. It is implemented to describe the perceptions of teachers and education personnel under the management of the Ministry of Religion in Central Java.

2.2. Participants

Table 1. Distribution of the Research Respondents

	District/ city	Teacher Subject			Education Staff Subject		
		MI	MTs	MA	MI	MTs	MA
1.	SL	3	3	3	3	3	3
2.	Kra	3	3	3	3	3	3
3.	SKh	3	3	3	3	3	3
4.	Wng	3	3	3	3	3	3
5.	Klt	3	3	3	3	3	3
6.	Byl	3	3	3	3	3	3
7.	Srg	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sub Total		21	21	21	21	21	21
Sub total		63			63		
Total		126					

The subjects of the study were of 126 teachers and education staff in Elementary School/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Junior High School/Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs)

and Senior High School/Madrasah Aliyah (MA) taken randomly through multi-stage sampling from seven districts in Central Java Province. A number of three teachers and three staffs from each district is as seen in the table 1.

From table 1, there are 126 respondents representing the population from seven districts in the Ministry of Religion.

2.3. Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected using questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to collect data on teachers' and education staff's understanding about the concept of inclusive education, the policy of implementing inclusive education and the level of acceptance of inclusive education implementation policies, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of inclusive education according to teachers and education staff. The interview method was used to collect data on their perceptions of inclusive education policies and the reasons for teachers and education staff about the possibility of their acceptance/rejection of the existence of children with disability in their schools.

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through several stages. Data collection was begun with applying permission to conduct research in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA). After getting permission from the school, the selection of the subject (teacher and the education staff) randomly / lottery was held. After selected the subject of research, the selected teachers and education staff were gathered in one place to collect the data by using questionnaire about perceptions of inclusive education policies and understanding of children with special needs.

After completing the questionnaire, the teachers and education staff then were interviewed regarding their acceptance or rejection if there were children with disability studying at the school. Interviews were also needed to reveal the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of inclusive education and the recommendations expected by teachers and education staff to improve the implementation of future inclusive education policies.

2.5. Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The data of perception was collected by means of questionnaire containing the variable of teachers and education staff on the rights and obligations of persons with disabilities and inclusive education policies, the validity was tested by using content validity on the feasibility or relevance of the questionnaire contents through rational analysis through expert judgment [12]. The experts were special education experts and inclusion

education experts, while the reliability of the instrument is needed to find out the consistency of the questionnaire results. In this study, the reliability was tested by using split-half reliability with the reliability level of 0.85 of Alpha Cronbach

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

This research was an explorative survey involving 42 teachers and school staffs under the Ministry of Religion representing purposively from 7 regencies of Central Java Indonesia. An interview was conducted in addition to the questionnaire. The data were analyzed by both quantitative and qualitative descriptions

3. Result

The Result in the research:

1. Not all teachers' and education staffs' know about inclusive education. Some are quite familiar, but some others do not. Such differences of knowledge among them can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Teachers' and School Staffs' Knowledgeability on CSN

No	Perception	Number	Percentage
1	Very Knowledgeable	18	13.3%
2	Knowledgeable	36	28.57%
3	Fairly Knowledgeable	21	16.6%
4	Poorly Knowledgeable	39	30.95%
5	Very Poorly Knowledgeable	12	9.5%
	Total	126	100%

The data shows 13,3 % of the respondents are very familiar with inclusion, 28.57% have enough understanding, and 16.6% do not know much about CSN included in regular schools. However, the rest 40% of them have poor knowledge about inclusive education. The figure indicates more respondents feel familiar with the policy of inclusion. It means more teachers and school staffs have positive response to the inclusion of CSN in regular schools.

2. The attitude of teachers and education staffs about inclusive education. The term attitude refers to an agreement of accepting or refusing CSN in the regular school settings so called inclusive school. From 126 respondents, the data shows the following distribution:

Table 3. Teachers & School Staffs' attitude towards Inclusion.

No	Perception	Number	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	18	14.28%
2	Agree	51	40.47%
3	Neutral	30	23.8%
4	Disagree	27	21.42%
5	Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total		126	100%

Based on the data above, it is known that most teachers and education staff (54.7%) accepted and agreed the inclusion of for children with disabilities, 23.8% answered with do not know and 21.42% did not agree to accept the inclusive education for children with disabilities. After interview, the respondents who answered did not know stated that they did not know the success of disability being educated in regular schools. Meanwhile, for respondents who refused / disagreed with disability education in inclusive schools they provided a reason that they agreed more on disability being educated in special schools.

- Perception of teachers and education staff on the policy of implementing inclusive education in the Ministry of Religion. Data on perceptions of teachers and education staff on inclusive education policies in education units within the Ministry of Religion revealed that 23 respondents (54.76%) accepted the policy, 15 people (35.7%) were hesitant to accept the policy and 4 (9.5%) rejected the policy. The result of interview with respondents who answered doubtfully and rejected inclusive education policies stated that because (1) teachers felt that they did not have the competence to teach children with disabilities, (2) teachers had never received in service training related to inclusive education and learning for children with disabilities, (3) facilities and infrastructure at schools in the Ministry of Religion are not yet accessible, (4) schools do not have special teachers to educate children with disabilities. The next question asked to respondents was about things that can make them accept inclusive education policies in their schools, the answers were: (1) requiring regulations from the Ministry of Religion regarding the implementation of inclusive education policies, (2) implementation instructions and technical instructions for the implementation of inclusive education, (3) training or in service training for teachers and education staff related to inclusive education, (4) provision of operational funding in inclusive education, (5) subsidizing learning facilities and infrastructure in inclusive class, and (6) provision/appointment of special staff as assistant teachers in inclusive schools.

4. Discussion

4.1. Teachers' and Education Staffs' Knowledge on CSN

Most teachers and education staffs are familiar with the characteristics of CSN. That is why they welcome the presence of persons with disabilities. It was indicated that 51 out of 126 people (40%) accept the existence of persons with disabilities in the community, and 60% of respondents did not fully recognize the importance of promoting the human right of CSN. These mean there could be internal factors related to their acceptance. Some respondents stated that people with disability are also human as well as themselves, Some others stated that they have persons with disabilities in their family member; and the others stated that there are people with disabilities in their living community. Based on the findings above, it is clear that more respondents accepted the existence of persons with disabilities. It implies that perception is influenced by frame of reference (knowledge) and frame of experience (experience of the surrounding environment). Since respondents realize that people with disabilities are also human as well as themselves, they accept the existence of persons with disabilities. Toha (2003) states that perceptions are also influenced by internal and external factors [13]. Internal factors include such as feelings, attitudes and personality of individuals, attention, learning process, physical condition, etc. Meanwhile, the influence of external factors includes family background and society of the individual living environment. Positive perceptions in terms of accepting the existence of persons with disabilities can be a preceding factor in the emergence of enthusiasm to provide services and opportunities for persons with disabilities to develop according to their needs and abilities. Otherwise, negative perceptions can weaken the enthusiasm to serve people with disabilities. The condition of positive perceptions of teachers and education staff needs to be maintained to become the capital of inclusive education policies within the Ministry of Religion in Indonesia.

4.2. Teachers and Education Staffs' Attitude towards Inclusion

In the respect of attitude, the results of data collection through questionnaires to 42 teacher respondents and education staff are known that 36 respondents (85.7%) agreed that disability was fulfilled their rights to obtain education, 4 people (9.5%) stated that they did not know, and 2 people (4.76%) answered disability is educated at home. The findings of this study are in line with the rights of persons with disabilities specifically regulated in Article 5 of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 8 of 2016, whose protection and fulfillment are adjusted to the specificity of

the conditions and needs of persons with disabilities. In general, the rights of persons with disabilities include the rights to life, the rights to be free from stigma, privacy rights, justice rights and legal protection, education rights, work rights, entrepreneurship and cooperatives, health rights, political rights, religious rights, and so on. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia has participated in ratifying the Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30th March 2007 in New York [3]. Then in 2011 Indonesia also ratified a convention in Law Number 19 of 2011 concerning Ratification of the Convention on Persons with Disabilities, to help protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities in Indonesia. Protection of disability rights in education is also emphasized in article 31 paragraph (1) containing (a) every citizen has the rights in education, (b) every citizen is obliged to attend basic education and the government is obliged to finance it, (c) the government strives and organizes a national education system, which enhances the faith and devotion and nobility in order to educate the nation regulated by the Law, (d) the state prioritizes the education of at least twenty percent of the state's income and state budget and from the regional income and regional budget for meeting the needs of implementing national education. Article 24 paragraph (1) in the Convention states that "States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. In order to fulfill this rights without discrimination and on the same occasion, States Parties must guarantee an education system that is inclusive at all levels and lifelong learning. It means that more teachers and school staffs have positive perception on inclusive education policy. Hence, they are willing to give better service to CSN [14]. Such various responses, however, indicate that not everyone of the respondents agrees to accept CSN to be included in an inclusive class. The gap is there, it is true that a bigger number (55%) of respondents agree to accept CSN in their class, but the rest (45%) state differently. Such a different perception among the teachers and school staffs will trigger some conflicts in term of decision making. From the interview, additionally, some teachers commented that they teach CSN in their classroom because they have to do so. They prefer teaching a class with no CSN. In line with this controversy, teachers who do not feel confident in teaching CSN tend to reject them [15]. Shortly to say, a threat exists in such a circumstance. However, a research by Gary and Vaughan (2004) found that teachers with positive perception indicated high awareness of humanistic needs of CSN for education [16] Positive and negative perceptions or the level of acceptance and rejection of one's inclusive education are largely influenced by the level of knowledge of the concept of inclusive education. Of the 126 respondents it was known that the level of understanding and deepening of the concept of inclusive education are as follows:

Teachers and school staffs are likely to be unfamiliar with the philosophy of inclusion. This evidence proves the

finding of a research by Suk Hwang & Evans (2011) that teachers are unsure of their professional knowledge based on how to cater for CSN in their classrooms [17]. It implies that there is a tendency of misleading perception among teachers and school staffs in fostering the philosophy of inclusive education. As a consequence, they might exhibit poor willingness to deal with CSN in the inclusive class. Hence, the success of CSN inclusion could be threatened. This is in line with a research finding by Manisah, Mustapha & Zizan Mohd (2006) stating that specific characteristics of inclusive education is indicated by the willingness to accept CSN in the inclusive class [18].

Similarly, teachers who are familiar with CSN tend to behave positively towards inclusion [7]. Additionally, training will lead to better perception. The longer the training, the more positive attitude a person can be towards the inclusive education [1]. From the interview, nevertheless, it shows that most teachers never had any training on inclusive education. More importantly, religion means more than just knowledge on disability. Teachers and staffs in the Ministry of Religion may not recognize the characteristic of children with disabilities, but put bigger empathy on them. This is not a matter of their knowledge about children with disabilities. Instead, it is of the religious power that makes them involved in human right dedication. It is the religion teaching that leads them to pay a big attention to their human right to education.

The perceptions of teachers and education staff on the policy of implementing inclusive education in the Ministry of Religion. It is known that 69 respondents (54.76%) accepted the policy, 30 people (23.8%) were hesitant to accept the policy and 27 (21.42%) refused. The results showed that most of the respondents have a positive perception of inclusive education policies in Ministry of Religion. As a new policy, it certainly requires a process of socialization in such a way [6] [11] to improve the understanding of stakeholders including teachers and education staff. This study is in line with the research findings by Manisah Ali & Mohd. (2006) and Paul Ajuwon's (2008) stating that a lack of understanding of inclusive education can give negative perceptions of inclusive education policies in Malaysia [18] [19].

Based on the interviews with respondents who answered hesitant and rejected inclusive education policies in the Ministry of Religion, the reasons are (1) teachers felt that they did not have the competence to teach children with disabilities, (2) teachers had never received in service training regarding inclusive education and learning for children with disabilities, (3) facilities and infrastructure in schools in the Ministry of Religion are not yet accessible, (4) schools do not have special teachers to educate children with disabilities. The awareness of teachers and education staff on the weaknesses and unpreparedness of schools to implement the inclusive education policy seems to be a consideration for the Ministry of Religion to equip everything needed to support the implementation of

inclusive education policies. This is in accordance with the respondent's statement about the need in the implementation of inclusive education in the Ministry of Religion, including; (1) requiring regulations from the Ministry of Religion regarding the implementation of inclusive education policies, (2) implementation instructions and technical instructions for the implementation of inclusive education, (3) training or in service training for teachers and education staff related to inclusive education, (4) provision of operational funding in inclusive education, (5) subsidizing learning facilities and infrastructure in inclusive class, and (6) provision/appointment of special staff as assistant teachers in inclusive schools.

5. Conclusions

The research draws the following conclusions:

1. Teachers and staff in the Ministry of Religion, virtuously have adequate perception. Some of them prove to accept the CSN in their schools. However, due to their limited understanding on the characteristics and their needs of CSN, not all teachers and school staffs under this Ministry are not in favour of accepting CSN in the regular schools. They have indifferent attitude mostly because they never have any trainings so that they have limited knowledge on the philosophy of inclusion.
2. The lack of knowledge, in addition, will be weakening their attitude towards the policy of inclusion system and triggers a misleading perception, low commitment, and dissatisfaction accordingly. These all could probably be the reasons why some teachers prefer removing the CSN to special schools, particularly those with no academic progress of learning. More importantly, religion back ground serves as the latent power among the teachers and staffs as the basic commitment to the human right dedication.
3. Hence, it is strongly recommended that:
 - a. Teachers and school staffs under the Ministry of Religion in Central Java need training and education to improve their knowledge and skills of teaching CSN in inclusive schools.
 - b. There should be law enforcement so as to build better awareness on the right of CSN to the quality education. In addition, law enforcement is also believed to have power in changing the mindset on more positive perception and attitude towards CSN and their future.

schools. Surakarta: Cakrawala Media

- [2] Lambe, Jackie. (2007). Northern Ireland student teachers' changing attitudes towards inclusive education during initial teacher training. *International Journal of Special Education*. 22 (1). pp. 128 – 136.
- [3] Ministry of Education and Culture Center for Educational Data and Statistics and Culture. (2017). *Indonesia Educational Statistics in Brief 2016/2017*. Retrieved July 21, 2017.
- [4] Ulfa, D.A. & Salim, A. (2018). Penerapan Kurikulum Berdiferensiasi Dalam Setting Sekolah Inklusif. *Jurnal Kependidikan*. Vol 2 (2). 35-47.
- [5] Furqon Hidayatulloh. (2017). Persepsi guru dan tenaga kependidikan terhadap penyandang disabilitas. Laporan Penelitian. Pascasarjana Universitas Sebelas Maret.
- [6] Gaad, E. & Khan. (2007). Primary mainstream teachers' attitude toward inclusion of students with special educational needs in the private sector: a perspective from Dubai. *International Journal of Special Education*. 22 (2). pp.34-48
- [7] DeBoer, A., Pijl, S., A., & Minnaert, A. (2011). Regular primary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education: Review of literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 15 (3). pp.331-353.
- [8] Slameto. (2010). *Belajar dan Factor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhinya*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- [9] Ramadhan, AN. (2015). Pengaruh Persepsi Siswa Terhadap Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Prestasi Belajar Teori Kejuruan Siswa SMK. *Jurnal Pendidikan Vokasi*, Vol 5 (3). pp. 100 – 110.
- [10] Richard, R. (2007). Estonian vocational teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs. *International Journal of Special Education*. 22 (3). pp. 35 – 45.
- [11] Charema, John. (2010). Inclusive Education in Developing Countries in The Sub Saharan Africa: From Theory to Practice. *International Journal of Special Education*. 25 (1). pp.87-95.
- [12] Anwar,S. (2012). *Reliabilitas dan Validitas*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar
- [13] Toha, Miftah. (2003). *Pembinaan Organisasi: Proses, Diagnosa dan Intervensi*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.
- [14] Gunarhadi, Sunardi, Anwar, Andayani, Shaari (2016). The effect of cluster based-instruction on mathematics achievement in inclusive schools. *International Journal of Special Education* 31(1). pp. 78-87.
- [15] Alghazo, E., M. & Gad, E. (2004). General education teachers in the United Arab Emirates and their acceptance of inclusion of students with disabilities. *British Journal of Special Education*. 31. pp. 94-99
- [16] Gary, T., & Vaughan, M. (2004). *Inclusive education: reading and reflection*. Glasgow: Bell & Bain Ltd.
- [17] Suk Hwang, Y., Evans, D. (2011). Attitude towards inclusion: Gaps between belief and practice. *International Journal of Special Education*. 26 (1). pp.136-146.

REFERENCES

- [1] Gunarhadi. (2014). Cluster model of instruction in inclusive

- [18] Manisah, Mustapha & Zizan Mohd Jelas. (2006). An Empirical study on theachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in Malaysia. *International Journal of Special Education*. 21 (3). pp. 79-92
- [19] Ajuwon, P.M. (2008). Inclusive education for students with disabilities in Nigeria: benefits, challenges and policy implications. *International Journal of Special education*. 23 (3). pp. 11-18