Disparities in School Community Acceptance Toward Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Schools in Surabaya

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Abstract: *Inclusion schools in Surabaya had operated for about 5 years however there were still variety problems which did not find any exact solution yet for inclusion schools and indicated some wrong understanding about school education so the problem still happened in the implementation, for example: the acceptance of special needs children existence in inclusion school. This research had purpose to describe the acceptance disparity of school people toward special needs children in the inclusion school in Surabaya city. The research design used qualitative approach with descriptive kind. The data collection technique used interview and observation. This research was implemented in 6 inclusion primary schools in Surabaya city. The research result indicated that each principal had differences in giving policy regarding with the specialty of special needs children received, especially in the case of physic and IQ value. For regular teachers, there were differences in giving service to special needs children who entered school. Each special education teacher had differences in managing school. In the case of forming behavior indicated to the children, the special education teachers mostly had similarity mission i.e. developing potential belonged to the students so that they were considered as the human being. In the case of forming behavior demonstrated by the educators to special need children there were some differences. 3 people avoided the children and there were some educators behaving good attitude. To regular students, there were differences in the case of forming behavior indicated to special need children. The conclusion of this research was the acceptance disparity of principal was in the policy given to special needs children and forming behavior indicated. For regular teachers and special education teachers there were some disparities in the case of giving service to special needs children while for the educators and regular students there were some acceptance disparities in the case of forming behavior showed to special needs children.*

Keywords*: Disparity, School people, Special needs children, Inclusion school*

Abstrak: Sekolah inklusi di Surabaya telah beroperasi selama sekitar lima tahun, namun masih terdapat berbagai permasalahan yang belum menemukan solusi yang tepat dan menunjukkan adanya pemahaman yang kurang tepat tentang pendidikan sekolah, sehingga permasalahan tersebut masih terjadi dalam pelaksanaannya, misalnya terkait penerimaan keberadaan anak berkebutuhan khusus di sekolah inklusi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan disparitas penerimaan warga sekolah terhadap anak berkebutuhan khusus di sekolah inklusi di Kota Surabaya. Desain penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dan observasi. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di enam sekolah dasar inklusi di Kota Surabaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setiap kepala sekolah memiliki perbedaan dalam pemberian kebijakan terkait jenis kekhususan anak berkebutuhan khusus yang diterima, khususnya dalam hal kondisi fisik dan nilai IQ. Pada guru reguler, terdapat perbedaan dalam pemberian layanan kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus yang bersekolah. Setiap guru pendidikan khusus juga menunjukkan perbedaan dalam pengelolaan sekolah. Dalam pembentukan perilaku yang ditunjukkan kepada anak, guru pendidikan khusus sebagian besar memiliki kesamaan misi, yaitu mengembangkan potensi yang dimiliki siswa agar mereka dipandang sebagai manusia seutuhnya. Namun, dalam perilaku yang ditunjukkan oleh para pendidik kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus, terdapat perbedaan; tiga orang pendidik menghindari anak-anak tersebut, sementara beberapa pendidik lainnya menunjukkan sikap yang baik. Pada siswa reguler, juga terdapat perbedaan dalam pembentukan perilaku yang ditunjukkan kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa disparitas penerimaan pada kepala sekolah terlihat pada kebijakan yang diberikan kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus dan perilaku yang ditunjukkan. Pada guru reguler dan guru pendidikan khusus terdapat disparitas dalam pemberian layanan kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus, sedangkan pada pendidik dan siswa reguler terdapat disparitas penerimaan dalam perilaku yang ditunjukkan kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus.

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of inclusive education in Surabaya began to develop around 2010. Although inclusive schools have been operating for approximately five years, there are still various problems that have not yet found appropriate solutions. One example can be found in an inclusive elementary school in West Surabaya, where a student with special needs who had potential in football was not included in a competition. Similarly, in an inclusive school in South Surabaya, the social interactions of students with special needs were not well established when interacting with regular students. This condition contradicts one of the principles of inclusive education proposed by Ford in Pratiswaluyo (2012), which emphasizes encouraging friendships between students with and without special needs.

On the other hand, an inclusive elementary school in East Surabaya shows indications that students with special needs are able to communicate well with regular students. Moreover, these students have also achieved good performance, such as winning second place in the 200-meter running competition at the city level. This is in contrast with other inclusive schools where the interaction between students with special needs and regular students tends to be disrupted. Many regular students still have negative perceptions toward children with special needs, which causes the social interactions in inclusive schools to not run well. This condition may lead to feelings of trauma among students with special needs, making them prefer to return to special classes rather than staying in inclusive classrooms.

According to Sheldon in Smith (2011), to become an inclusive school means to eliminate discrimination, in which every member of the school community must accept diversity and differences within the classroom. The acceptance of students with special needs by the school community has a significant impact on their development. This has been proven by Choykhruea's research (2011) in Thailand, which found that autistic students in inclusive schools were able to develop good social interactions because teachers and other students had positive perceptions toward them. Similar findings were also revealed by Kurniawati et al. (2014) in their study at an inclusive elementary school in Payakumbuh, showing that 50.7% of teachers understood the specific services needed by students with special needs, ensuring that the support provided was appropriate to their individual needs.

Based on these conditions, several research problems were formulated, namely: (1) the principal's acceptance toward students with special needs; (2) regular teachers' acceptance toward students with special needs; (3) special education teachers' acceptance toward students with special needs; (4) school staff's acceptance toward students with special needs; and (5) regular students' acceptance toward students with special needs. The purpose of this study was to describe the disparities in acceptance among school members toward students with special needs in inclusive schools.

2. METHOD

The characteristics of this research were determined based on several considerations. First, there are differences in understanding regarding students with special needs among various school members. Second, there are different ways of treating students with special needs within inclusive schools. Third, it is necessary to explore and describe these phenomena in depth. Fourth, the nature of the phenomenon is not suitable for quantitative analysis.

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach, which was appropriate to the research objectives—namely, to describe the disparities in acceptance among school members toward students with special needs in inclusive schools.

The analysis in this study referred to the flow model of analysis, recognizing that the information obtained during the study was the result of collaboration between the researcher and the informants. Therefore, interviews were conducted to explore the differences in acceptance among school members based on the actual situations that occurred in each school (natural setting).

This study focused on the acceptance of school members toward students with special needs in inclusive schools. The research was conducted in six schools: SDN Pacarkeling IX, SDN Wonorejo V, SDN Banyu Urip V, SDN Gundih I, SDN Tandes Kidul I, and SDN Ketintang II in Surabaya.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews conducted in several schools, it was found that most principals had relatively similar understandings about students with special needs. However, there were differences regarding IQ limits and the types of disabilities that were accepted in inclusive schools. Regarding their first impressions, most principals admitted that they needed time to adapt when first interacting with students with special needs. According to Pristiwaluyo (2009), students with special needs should be given an understanding of independent living as they grow and develop, so principals need additional knowledge about handling students with special needs.

The researcher also found that all principals implemented the 2013 curriculum with modifications. The difference was in the placement of students with special needs in classrooms. This is consistent with Smith's (2006) opinion that the curriculum in inclusive schools should be adapted to the abilities of students. Forcing students with special needs to follow the standard curriculum would violate their right to develop their potential.

Among regular teachers, two of them expressed pity when they saw students with physical limitations, while others questioned why children with special needs were allowed to enter regular schools. As a result, these teachers tended to keep their distance from students with special needs. However, three other teachers tried to understand the students' academic abilities and often interacted directly with them. This finding is inconsistent with Subini (2014:53), who states that acceptance from all parties—including teachers—is essential in inclusive schools. When students with special needs are placed in a supportive environment, their confidence and abilities will develop optimally.

The study also found that most regular teachers shared similar practices regarding teaching services. For example, administrative tasks such as filling out report cards and preparing tests were handed over to the special education teachers (GPK) because they were considered more competent in handling students with special needs. However, lesson delivery was still conducted by regular teachers. Farida et al. (2012:200) emphasize that education should be based on fairness, meaning that all students must be treated appropriately and proportionally. Therefore, in inclusive classrooms, regular teachers should give equal opportunities to students with special needs to participate, ask questions, express opinions, and feel comfortable during the learning process.

Regarding the attitudes of special education teachers (GPK), it was found that some of them occasionally showed discomfort when interacting with students with special needs. Nevertheless, most GPKs provided services that matched the students' abilities and needs. Saroni (2013:107) explains that teachers are the key to understanding students' needs. They should design and prepare engaging learning strategies so that students—both regular and with special needs—feel comfortable while learning and do not feel pressured to achieve high grades, but rather enjoy the process of gaining knowledge.

In terms of the understanding of school staff, the findings show that most of them agreed that students with special needs are those who have limitations and require special treatment. All six staff members stated that there were no specific administrative services for students with special needs. However, two schools mentioned that they did not fully understand the administration of inclusive education and therefore delegated these responsibilities to the GPKs. Initially, most staff members felt uncomfortable with the presence of students with special needs. According to Saroni (2014:176), improving the character quality of the school community can be achieved by fostering a sense of belonging. However, this sense of belonging among school staff in the inclusive schools studied was still relatively low.

Regarding regular students, the researcher found that most of them understood that students with special needs were originally from special classes. Some students admitted feeling confused when they first saw their peers who behaved differently or used assistive devices, such as headphones. Initially, they did not communicate with students with special needs, but after receiving explanations from the GPK, they began to interact and communicate more openly. All regular students stated that there was no special treatment during classroom activities, except that the number and difficulty level of exam questions were adjusted. These questions were usually prepared by the GPK who accompanied the students daily. Marlina (2008) states that peers play an important role in supporting students with special needs, because most of their interactions occur with classmates. If peers avoid them, it can

negatively affect the psychological well-being of students with special needs, who are often emotionally sensitive.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, four main findings can be summarized regarding the acceptance of school community members toward students with special needs in inclusive schools in Surabaya:

4.1.1. Principals have a generally similar understanding of students with special needs, but there are differences in policies related to the types of disabilities accepted and how principals interact with these students. Some principals avoid direct contact because they feel unprepared, while others engage directly to motivate students.

4.1.2. Regular teachers differ in providing services to students with special needs. Some assist them in class activities, while others believe that handling these students is the responsibility of the GPK. Most regular teachers admitted feeling surprised or unprepared when first meeting students with special needs.

4.1.3. Special education teachers (GPK) show differences in class management. Some schools place students with special needs in regular classes, while others provide separate classrooms. Most GPKs, however, share a common goal of developing students' potential holistically.

4.1.4. School staff generally understand that students with special needs require special attention, although attitudes toward them vary. In terms of administration, most schools do not differentiate between regular and special needs students, although some delegate administrative duties to GPKs.

4.1.5. Regular students also demonstrate varied behaviors. Some initially avoid students with special needs because of misunderstanding, while others gradually show acceptance after receiving guidance from GPKs.

4.2. Suggestions

4.2.1. For Teachers: Regular and special education teachers are expected to collaborate in providing services for students with special needs in inclusive schools. Teachers should also encourage regular students to respect and understand their peers with special needs.

4.2.2. For Principals: Principals should enhance their understanding of inclusive education management to reduce negative perceptions among teachers, parents, and students, and to guide teachers in delivering optimal support to students with special needs.

4.2.3. For the Surabaya Education Department: It is recommended to conduct regular supervision of inclusive schools to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education programs and to ensure that services for students with special needs continue to improve.

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