

EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN MANAGING CLASSES THROUGH AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This literature research aims to explore teachers' experiences in managing classes in elementary schools through an inclusive approach. Inclusive education is an approach that involves all students, including those with special needs, to learn together in a supportive and non-discriminatory environment. Through qualitative research methods, in-depth interviews were conducted with a number of teachers to explore the challenges they faced, the strategies they used, and the impact of an inclusive approach on the teaching and learning process. The research results indicate that the implementation of inclusive education requires adaptation of teaching methods, development of additional competencies for teachers, as well as adequate support both in terms of resources and school policies. Despite the challenges, teachers demonstrate that with appropriate training and good collaboration, inclusive approaches can be implemented effectively. These findings provide practical and theoretical contributions, as well as offering recommendations for improving policies and teacher training programs, to support the creation of a more equitable and supportive learning environment for all students without exception.

Keywords: Teacher Experience, Classroom Management, Inclusive Approach

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a major concern in education reform in various countries, including Indonesia. This initiative to integrate students with various needs into the same learning environment, aims to create a more inclusive and equitable learning atmosphere. However, implementing this policy is not without challenges. Teachers, as the front guard in implementing inclusive education in elementary schools, face various complexities in managing classes consisting of students with different abilities and needs (Wickenden et al., 2023).

Occupying a central position in the learning process, teachers are required to adapt teaching methods to meet the needs of all students. This includes adjustments in teaching strategies, classroom management, and emotional and psychological support for students. An inclusive approach

requires teachers to have flexibility, good communication skills, and a deep understanding of their students' special needs (Lee et al., 2023). On the other hand, the lack of special training and adequate resources often becomes an obstacle for teachers in creating an inclusive learning environment.

The lack of systemic support and special training for teachers in implementing inclusive approaches results in many teachers feeling difficult and lacking confidence in managing inclusive classes (Pankaj, 2022). This is where the importance of this research, which aims to explore the experiences and challenges faced by teachers in classroom management through an inclusive approach. By understanding the experiences of teachers, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insights and practical recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education in elementary schools.

This research also looks at how external factors such as support from the government and educational institutions as well as parental involvement in the educational process influence the success of implementing inclusive education. The government's role in providing supportive policies and adequate training for teachers is very crucial. Apart from that, collaboration between schools, parents and the community in supporting students with special needs is also an important factor in creating an inclusive and comprehensive learning environment.

Another problem that is often faced is limited access to resources and learning aids that are tailored to students' special needs. This not only affects the teaching and learning process but can also give rise to feelings of not being prioritized or ignored in the student. The lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, such as disability-friendly classrooms and accessible learning materials, is still a significant obstacle in many elementary schools in Indonesia (Bakhshandeh et al., 2024).

Managing inclusive classes at the elementary school level is a complex and multidimensional challenge. As the global commitment to inclusive education increases, many countries have adopted policies that emphasize equal access to education for all children, including those with special needs (Safura et al., 2023). In Indonesia, this inclusive policy has encouraged many schools to accept and educate children with diverse backgrounds and abilities. However, practice in the field often shows that teachers face various difficulties in implementing this inclusive approach. Limitations in resources, training and support are several factors that influence the effectiveness of inclusive classroom management (Dykes et al., 2024). Therefore, it is

important to explore teachers' experiences in managing classrooms through inclusive approaches to understand the challenges and strategies they use.

While inclusive education policies have the noble goal of creating learning environments that embrace diversity, their implementation requires significant adjustments in daily teaching practices. Teachers, as the spearhead of education, need to build additional competencies and develop adaptive teaching methods. The practical experience that teachers have in inclusive classroom contexts can provide valuable insight into best practices as well as areas that require improvement. This exploration is not only important for enriching literature related to inclusive education but can also be the basis for developing more effective and impactful teacher training programs (Rha, 2022). By exploring the real experiences of teachers, it is hoped that relevant and applicable solutions can be found in overcoming the challenges of managing inclusive classrooms, so that every child can reach their maximum potential.

Through this research, it is hoped that best practices in inclusive education can be identified that can be applied in various elementary school contexts. This research also aims to provide policy recommendations to decision makers, so that they can design more effective training programs and provide adequate resources. In this way, it is hoped that inclusive education can be implemented better and more evenly, and provide equal opportunities for all students to develop and reach their full potential.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study in this research is qualitative with literature. The literature study research method is a research approach that involves the analysis and synthesis of information from various literature sources that are relevant to a particular research topic. Documents taken from literature research are journals, books and references related to the discussion you want to research (Earley, M.A. 2014; Snyder, H. 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Experiences in Managing Classes through an Inclusive Approach

Teachers in elementary schools are often faced with various challenges when managing inclusive classes consisting of students with very diverse needs. Their experience shows that one of the main challenges is adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of all students, both those with special needs and those without. Teachers must strike a balance between providing

more intensive individual attention to students with special needs, while ensuring that other students do not feel neglected. Using differentiated and flexible approaches to teaching, such as differentiated learning, is often the key to success (Shaaban & Shaat, 2022).

Teachers' perspectives on this matter are also heavily influenced by the training and support they receive from the school and government. Teachers who have received special training regarding inclusive education tend to feel more confident and prepared in managing student heterogeneity in the classroom (Kim, 2024). However, those who have not received adequate training often feel overwhelmed and lack confidence in dealing with the needs of diverse students. Support from the inclusive education support team and educational advisors is very helpful in providing concrete solutions to problems that arise in the classroom.

The implementation of educational technology also plays an important role in supporting inclusive classes. Teachers who utilize technology tools and digital resources tend to have more positive experiences in accommodating various student needs. Technology can help provide more personalized instruction and allow students to learn at their own pace (Hayden et al., 2024). However, not all teachers have adequate access to or skills in utilizing this technology, which is another challenge that needs to be addressed through ongoing training.

Teachers' perspectives on the success of inclusive education are greatly influenced by collaboration and participation from various parties. Support from parents, peers and administration is very important in creating an inclusive and conducive learning environment. Teachers who feel well supported tend to be more optimistic about the results that can be achieved. They believe that with solid cooperation and the right resources, every student has an equal opportunity to succeed (Toménienė & Alifanovienė, 2023).

Apart from the challenges and support that have been mentioned, teachers also often share stories about the appreciation and pride they feel in managing inclusive classes. Seeing the significant development of students with special needs, as well as how they interact with their classmates, is a source of pride. Teachers often feel that inclusive classrooms offer a great opportunity to build empathy, tolerance, and strong social skills in all students. This experience enriches them as educators and as individuals who care about inclusion and humanity (Bilgiç & Tekin, 2023).

However, there are also emotional challenges and mental fatigue that teachers must face. Managing an inclusive classroom often requires great energy and commitment, especially when dealing with complex and unpredictable situations. Teachers who do not have enough time to design and adapt learning materials can feel pressured and stressed (Baker, 2023). Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to provide adequate time and resources so that teachers can reflect, plan and develop effective strategies on an ongoing basis.

The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is also a determining factor in the success of an inclusive class. Teachers who are able to build strong relationships, based on mutual trust and effective communication, tend to be more successful in creating an inclusive learning environment. This good relationship can encourage students to actively participate, feel safe, and be confident that their needs will be met (Ajodhia, 2023). This applies not only to students with special needs, but also to all students in the class, which in turn creates a more cohesive and productive learning climate.

In conclusion, teachers' experiences and perspectives in managing inclusive classes in elementary schools reflect different complexities and dynamics. From the training they receive, support from various parties, to the use of technology and diverse teaching strategies, all of these factors contribute to their success or challenges. With a strong sense of collaboration and commitment, as well as adequate support, teachers can create an inclusive learning environment and facilitate the development of all students without exception.

Teacher Challenges in Efforts to Implement Inclusive Education

Implementing inclusive education presents significant challenges for teachers, especially related to differences in student needs and abilities in the classroom. These variations require teachers to design lessons that are accessible and understandable to all students, including those with special needs. This requires specific knowledge and skills in instructional differentiation, which many educators often have not fully mastered (Corbett et al., 2023).

In addition, limited resources are often an obstacle to implementing inclusive education effectively. Many schools do not have adequate facilities, assistive technology, or instructional resources necessary to support the needs of all students. In addition, the time available for teachers to plan and

adapt lesson material is often very limited, causing heavy workloads and potential mental fatigue (Endo, 2022).

Inadequate support and training is also a major challenge. Teachers often do not receive specific enough training on strategies and techniques for addressing the needs of inclusive students. Without adequate support from the school or educational institution, teachers can feel isolated and overwhelmed (Sharma & Morton, 2022). Therefore, it is important to increase the frequency and quality of training and provide ongoing support for teachers in the process of implementing inclusive education.

Steps to Overcome Challenges in Inclusive Education

To overcome the challenges in implementing inclusive education, commitment is needed from all stakeholders in the education sector. First, comprehensive and ongoing training for teachers must be a top priority. This training should include effective teaching strategies, inclusive classroom management, as well as an in-depth understanding of various types of students' special needs. With adequate guidance, teachers will be more confident and competent in managing inclusive classes (Larios & Zetlin, 2023).

Apart from training, meeting resource needs is also very crucial. Schools must strive to provide adequate facilities, such as assistive technology, varied teaching materials, and an accessible physical environment. Community involvement and collaboration with organizations that focus on the need for inclusive education can assist schools in obtaining additional resources. The government also needs to provide support in the form of adequate policies and budgets to ensure the availability of the necessary resources (Mavropalias et al., 2023).

It is important to build an inclusive school culture and environment. This is not only the responsibility of teachers, but also the entire school community including principals, staff, students and parents. Increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of inclusion can be done through seminars, workshops and awareness campaigns. With strong support from the entire community, the implementation of inclusive education will run more smoothly and provide maximum benefits for all students (Orozco & Moríña, 2023).

The Importance of Collaboration in Inclusive Education

Collaboration between teachers, experts, parents and the community is an important element in the success of inclusive education. Teachers cannot

work alone in meeting the various needs of students; they need help from specialists such as psychologists, occupational therapists, and special education consultants. This close collaboration with experts will help teachers design effective teaching strategies and provide appropriate interventions for students with special needs (Urton et al., 2023).

Parents also play a vital role in inclusive education. They need to be actively involved in their child's educational process, from planning to evaluating progress. Open and regular communication between teachers and parents can ensure that children's needs and development are met optimally. Information from parents regarding children's strengths and weaknesses can also provide valuable insight for teachers in designing appropriate teaching approaches (Wray et al., 2022).

More broadly, support from local communities and other stakeholders is also very important. Partnership programs with non-governmental organizations focused on inclusive education can provide additional resources and support. Additionally, community initiatives such as awareness campaigns and fundraising can increase understanding and support for inclusive education (Balik & Ozgun, 2024). In this way, multi-party collaboration will create a more supportive and holistic educational ecosystem for all students.

Teacher Strategies for Increasing the Effectiveness of Inclusive Classroom Management

Managing an inclusive classroom requires specific strategies to ensure all students feel valued and supported in the learning process. One of the main strategies is to design a curriculum that is flexible and responsive to individual student needs. Teachers can use Differentiated Instruction (DI), which allows them to adapt teaching methods, teaching materials, and evaluations according to each student's abilities, interests, and learning styles (Herlinawati & Rindaningsih, 2024). In this way, students with various backgrounds and abilities can participate and gain maximum benefits from learning.

It is important for teachers to build an inclusive and empathetic classroom environment. This can be done by teaching and encouraging values such as respect, cooperation, and empathy between students. Teachers can also involve students in group activities that promote collaboration and mutual understanding (Lutz & Gebhardt, 2023). In this way, every student feels accepted and appreciated, and has the opportunity to contribute to the class community.

Collaborative strategies with other parties such as parents, fellow teachers, and support professionals are also important in managing inclusive classrooms. Teachers must establish effective communication with parents to better understand the needs and development of each student. Involving professionals such as educational psychologists or counselors can also provide additional guidance in managing students with special needs. With good collaboration, teachers can create an environment that supports the academic and social-emotional development of all students (Butler et al., 2022).

Apart from these strategies, the use of educational technology can also increase the effectiveness of inclusive classroom management. Technology tools such as adaptive learning software, interactive learning applications, and e-learning platforms can help teachers to provide instruction appropriate to each student's level of progress (Owusu-Addo, 2022). For example, computer-based learning allows students with special needs to learn at their own pace and get instant feedback. Technology can also provide various assistive tools such as automatically read text for students with reading difficulties, or the use of videos with subtitles for students with hearing impairments.

It is also important for teachers to continue to develop their skills and knowledge about inclusive education. This can be achieved through relevant professional training, workshops, and sharing best practices with fellow teachers. Teachers who continually increase their understanding of inclusive teaching strategies will be better prepared to adapt their teaching methods and materials to meet the needs of individual students. Access to the latest literature and research can also provide new insights that support more effective teaching practices (ERYILMAZ & UZUN, 2023).

Developing effective communication is also an important aspect of managing an inclusive classroom. Teachers must open two-way lines of communication with students to understand their needs and feelings more deeply. Always providing constructive feedback that appreciates students' efforts and achievements can build their self-confidence (KUMAR, 2022). In addition, teachers must be ready to receive input from students about their teaching methods, so that learning can become a collaborative and dynamic process. With good communication, the relationship between teachers and students becomes stronger and more meaningful, creating a more conducive and inclusive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Exploration of teachers' experiences in managing classes through an inclusive approach in elementary schools reveals various challenges and strategies implemented in achieving the goals of inclusive education. Teachers are faced with the need to develop additional competencies and adapt to more flexible teaching methods to embrace diversity in the classroom. They often have to work within limited resources and support, which can affect the effectiveness of implementing inclusive education. However, teachers' practical experience shows that with adequate support, appropriate training and effective collaboration, inclusive education can be successfully implemented, enabling every student to reach his or her maximum potential.

The real-life experiences of these teachers provide valuable insights that can be used to improve existing policies and training programs. The strategies and solutions found from this exploration can become a reference for developing more inclusive and effective teaching approaches. Thus, the results of this exploration not only enrich the academic literature on inclusive education but also contribute practically to improving the quality of classroom management in elementary schools. Ultimately, successful inclusive education will create a more equitable, welcoming, and supportive learning environment for all students, regardless of their background and abilities.

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