

Teachers' Knowledge and Experience Dealing With Students With Learning Disabilities in Inclusive Elementary School

Sari Rudiwati,

Department of Special Education
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY)
Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
sari_rudiati@uny.ac.id

Mumpuniarti

Department of Special Education
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY)
Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
mumpuni@uny.ac.id

Pujaningsih

Lecturer of Special Education Department Faculty of
Education
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY)
pujaningsih@uny.ac.id

Abstract This study aims to portray teachers' knowledge and experience dealing with students with learning disabilities in inclusive elementary school Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia; and its implication in providing learning accommodations and modifications for students with learning disabilities. This study employed descriptive qualitative research method. Data collection techniques by observation and question -naire. Observation guides in the form of a checklist of students with learning disabilities that arise based on the knowledge and experience of teachers, and questionnaire along with the efforts of teachers to accommodate and modify learning. Results showed that the teachers still do not know how to distinguish children with learning disabilities among children with learning difficulties. Students with learning disabilities in inclusive elementary schools found for slow learner learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, learning disabilities and students with fewer than learners slow learner and mild mental retardation. Furthermore, the teachers provide curriculum adjustments as a part of learning accommodation and modification on the basis of the knowledge and experience they have.

Keywords *Teacher's knowledge and experience, Children with learning disabilities, Inclusive classroom*

I.INTRODUCTION

The existence of children with specific learning difficulties or children with learning disabilities is common in developed countries occupy the highest percentage compared to children with other special needs. Forty percent of the total school-age students with all kinds of disability identified as students with Learning Disabilities (LD). The number of students with LD was around 2.3 million, or approximately 5% of total students in the U.S [9]. Research on children with learning difficulties in Indonesia is still rare and limited only to certain areas population. In 1994 Abdurrahman and Ibrahim research found that of the 3,215 students in grade one to grade six elementary schools in Jakarta, Indonesia, there was 16.52 % which estimated as a student teacher, including learning disabilities [1]. A research conducted by Pujaningsih et al. in 2002 in the district Berbah, Yogyakarta, Indonesia found that children who have learning problems, or what they called children with learning difficulties by 36 % to 12 % the details of which slow learner, 16 % specific learning disabilities (LD/learning disabili -ties), and 17% mental retardation (Mentally retarded). [20].

The prevalence of students with learning disabilities based on previous studies is quite high, but this condition has not been accompanied adequate treatment. In fact, an understanding of children with learning disabilities itself is still limited in our society, including among teachers or labor

educators. This then makes mislabel of children because teachers consider them as a “stupid kid, lazy boy, or underachiever.” In addition to this, the existence of such children is found as one of the triggers of stress experienced by teachers [4]. They show a continuous basis the deviant behavior, motivation, attention and low response to instructional. The class teacher at 18 Primary Schools in Yogyakarta municipality, Indonesia mentioned there are approximately 3-4 children with learning difficulties in their classroom per year and expressed as a burden [21].

This study is conducted in the effort to portray current situations and provide the initial information in the form of how primary school teachers are dealing with children with learning disabilities in order to investigate the gap between the real intervention with the suitable education services. Then, the researchers needs develop manual handling packed for an in-service training program to support teacher competencies to provide learning accommodation and modification for children with learning disabilities. Through in-service training program, it is expected that teachers will accept the existence of the children with learning disabilities and be able to handle them in accordance with the conditions and needs[22].

The discussion about learning disabilities started at the beginning of 1990 in Indonesia. A talk show about the presence of children with Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD) was conducted by several Teacher Training Institute. Minimal brain dysfunction is a medical term problem while there is a learning problem then there was an agreement to change the terms MBD into specific learning disabilities. By mid-decade 90 Educational institutions of educational personnel opened for children with specific learning disabilities or children with learning disabilities, and there are several educational institutions that start with program for children with specific learning disabilities. [21].

Definition of learning disabilities imposes specific criteria as follows:

Specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes that include language comprehension and use of speech or writing. The disorder may manifest themselves in the form of difficulty listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. These limits include conditions such as perceptual disorders, brain injury, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The limit does not

include children who have learning problems that cause mainly comes from the presence of obstacles in vision, hearing, or motor, obstacles due to mental retardation, emotional disturbance because of poverty or because of environmental, cultural, or economic. [10] [11] [12].

The definition presented above affirm a number of aspects in describing learning disabilities: Gap between potential and achievement. In the case of learning disabilities, the achievement gap and the potential to be a reference based on some definition put forward by the expert. The achievement here refers to the current academic skills that can be known from the work of children in several subjects (reading, math, writing, etc.) [10]. As noted in the definition of a specific learning disability, a specific learning disability that manifests primarily in areas related to academics, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and likes. Whereas, referring to the potential for intellectual ability as measured by intelligence tests. A specific learning difficulties usually have problems with academic achievement, especially in certain areas, although it has intelligence that actually average or even superior to those of his age. [11]. It is not caused by external factors directly. Even so, some things need to be considered when this formula is used as regards the determination of a specific learning disability as expressed by various experts which include: (a) Children with specific learning disabilities possible to obtain low IQ scores due to their inability in the language so that the gap cannot be seen, especially since many IQ tests which contain language skills, both oral and written. (b) The span of the gap between children's achievement and his/her potential is not clear and might have a potential mis-interpretation that may lead to different conclusions. How far the gap? Do the children with an IQ of 115 (above average) who obtain an average value of 7 at school experiencing the same gap with a child with an IQ of 90 (average) who obtained a value of 5. [15].

The definitions put forward on this, but a number definition of a specific learning difficulty occurs due to an interruption in the process of understanding or processing of the stimulus, either in the form of language or the other. This means that there is a difference between learning disabilities with non-related processing in the brain.

Children with learning disabilities experience academic problems due to a disturbance in the process of receiving and processing the stimulus information. They might have a problem in one or

more of the attention, sensation, perception, information processing, or storage and retrieval of information which link to the understanding of learning. These processes are fundamental psychological processes [10].

The criteria are challenging in the process of diagnosed if the teachers do not have enough support from other expertise. The situation in Indonesia where counselor and psychologist are rarely found in the school district caused challenging situations to recognize and provide adequate educational services. Children with learning disabilities in this study do not include children with intellectual disabilities. The conditions which mentioned in terms of children with learning disabilities occur in conditions of perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and aphasia development are not widely known by teachers. For this reason, teachers in this study recognize the students who are suspected as learning disabilities through student daily academic performance which are below the regular students and have specific errors patterns in their assignments. In this situation, teacher competencies would be the only alternative way to recognize and provide educational services for students with learning disabilities.

Challenges to deal with students with learning disabilities as part of diverse learners require high competencies of teaching. When the teachers do not have adequate competencies, they might have more stress. Two major issues that cause teachers' stress and burnout: behavior problems and inadequate teaching competence to provide an appropriate education program for all students [8]. In addition to this, the competence of teacher is very influential in the teaching-learning process [1][18]. Furthermore, teachers with a variety of professional competence are require, one of them is provide learning accommodation and modification to meet a variety of learning needs of learners.

Teachers' knowledge and experience of teaching competence depend on their belief in teaching values which applied to the act of learning to the learners. The program in the classroom by teachers established on the basis of a belief-value grades, primarily for teacher's competence [2][4][8][16][17]. The relationship between belief in the value of the professional competence of teachers would encourage teachers to realize the action learning in the classroom. The belief was based on the value of teachers' knowledge and experience of effective learning. Teachers' knowledge and experience of the value of teachers' professional beliefs as the basis for

professional action is also related to how to solve the problems in the classroom, especially for students with learning disabilities. The teachers' competencies to deal students with learning problem is need improvement because it is still problematic. In one way, the teachers need to overcome these problems and provide adequate educational services. [16],[19]. In another way, they have limited information about the children with learning disabilities and how to deal with them. Furthermore, how teachers' action to overcome the problems with limited knowledge and experiences will shape their perception of a student with learning disabilities. Thus, this research is focused on the current knowledge and experiences of the teachers to provide learning accommodations and modifications for students with learning disabilities. The teachers' knowledge and experience described in this study as the result of the knowledge and experience of teachers will be used as the basis to provide training for teachers to increase the professional competence in handling students with learning disabilities in elementary school.

The effectiveness of the pedagogical and didactic categories include a clear guidance for developing tasks for learners and providing lessons for learners. The way teachers prepare and implement the learning strategy is developed on the basis of prior knowledge and experience. Previous knowledge and experience that is the perception of teachers that will shape the behavior in professional duties, guiding and providing learning for learners with special needs [2][3][4]. The most student teachers enter the pre-service program with an established set of beliefs [2].

The similar idea that preliminary experiences and beliefs formed teachers' personality. In addition to this, teachers' expectation and perceptions of students with learning disabilities will depend on their prior knowledge and accumulation of prior experiences [14].

II. METHOD

This study employed descriptive qualitative research. The subject of the research was 30 teachers of inclusive elementary school in Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia. Research on modification and learning accommodations for students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms is the necessary steps to provide knowledge about the restrictions meant learning disabilities. Perception is already held by teachers as a basis for determining the training materials and product development guidance on modification and learning accommodations for students with learning disabilities in inclusive elementary schools.

In order to gather the information of the teacher's knowledge and experience, focus group discussions on children with learning disabilities was used, then the teacher was given a questionnaire and observation guide to identify students who may be categorized as children with learning disabilities. Discussion groups to discuss each other about the problems of identifying learners who are categorized as having learning disabilities and follow-up in learning. The results of the discussion need to be captured through a questionnaire to find out if the teacher's perception changes and were able to identify learners who are categorized as learning disabilities, particularly those with specific learning difficulties category. Questionnaire outline digging in the aspect of knowledge, attitudes, and actions taken by the teacher if found learners with specific learning difficulties or learning disabilities.

Results netting consist of knowledge, attitudes, and actions of teachers through a questionnaire and the results were analyzed with descriptive qualitative analysis techniques broadly used as a basis for discussion with team collaboration of researchers from the faculty of Education Chiang Mai University, Thailand. Discussions in the form of a comparison of the prevalence of children with learning disabilities, knowledge, attitudes, and actions of teachers to students who have learning disabilities.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results showed that the statements and questions raised by teachers when the group discussions and the results confirmed the statements in the questionnaire were categorized into three major groups, namely the teacher's knowledge of students with learning disabilities in inclusion elementary school; attitudes of teachers towards students with learning disabilities; and actions taken by the teacher based on the knowledge that has been held as the basic same perception of the phenomenon of students with specific learning difficulties or learning disabilities in inclusive primary schools. Results were expressed among others as follows:

At the time of the research team explains that among learners with learning difficulties that there are types of learners that category specific learning disabilities or learning disabilities. This category of children who experience barriers in the field of basic psychology that shortfall to certain academic fields. That's because there are specific areas of the brain dysfunction resulting from the neurological function is also impaired. When given an explanation of the

teachers and then spontaneously stated that the definition of the child they do not know, so long as they perceive that learning disabilities are children whose cognitive barriers categories, namely intellectual disabilities.

Teachers' knowledge and experience about children's knowledge learning disabilities include: knowledge and experience of the characteristics of children with learning disabilities, the perception of learning materials that can be given, and the perception of learning appropriate ways do teachers against children specific learning difficulties were found. It is described as follows:

The knowledge and experience they have of these teachers because it is often found in the classroom are children categorized as intellectual disabilities. It is proved that the organizer of the 15 inclusive primary schools there are 111 children suspected learning disabilities, but after further assessment, only 50 children who have learning disabilities, and the remainder of the children with intellectual disabilities. It was also corroborated by the submission of the results of a research team from the Faculty of Education Chiang May University that a majority of the incidence of children with learning disabilities in elementary school are children whose mild intellectual disability category and a slow learner[22]. Characteristics characterized by the inability to follow the lessons associated with the use of symbols, as in Indonesian on reading and writing, and math.

The material presented simplified teachers on content, meaning that more modest than that presented to other students, and reduced material content of each stage of the material held in practice repetition. As stated by almost all teachers in elementary school that the repetition of material is often carried out to be able to master the material for children with learning barriers. This is consistent with the statement of the teacher of Yuliana (pseudonym) like this: "I often reduce the content of the subject matter, and often I repeated the explanation that I have given, but why bother once they understand, but with patience, eventually the child can better understand". Materials relate to reading are starting from the smallest component, for example, began the introduction of letters, assembled into syllables, the newly formed word. The material is organized on the stage of the most easily trained to the child if the child is able to achieve learning targets, new material to proceed with the next target. Knowledge and experience of how learning is done by teachers of children with learning disabilities were found. Based on the knowledge of teachers who have

owned before having the perception of children with learning disabilities, that they are categorized learning difficulties need to be given a way to learn to use more time, repetition to practice to learn the material and the use of props concrete.

Knowledge and experience about the characteristics of children with specific learning difficulties that teachers are pushing them as a problem child. Thus, the teacher requires more power to provide solutions instead of giving lessons to students who are not learning disabilities. They expressed various objections, even the limitations of teachers in inclusive schools as an obstacle to giving lessons to students with learning disabilities. The attitude that the object to it because they do not have the proper competence to learning for those who are considered learning disabilities, specific learning difficulties in particular.

The teacher's behavior because of their perceptions of the students with learning disabilities include: provide an additional task on perceived difficult subjects. The task was used as exercises to do things that feel difficult, so we need to add time to learn. Other actions teachers provide assistance with media props concrete objects on the material that is deemed difficult. This is done by the teacher because the teacher's perception of children with learning difficulties are difficulties in the field of abstract thought.

Discussion

Teachers' knowledge and experience that children are children with specific learning cognitive barriers, due to child-specific learning disabilities appear as children experiencing difficulties. Thus, the criteria referred to child-specific learning disabilities is not known properly by the teacher [20][21][22]. That perception becomes a matter that applies to all teachers in inclusive elementary school that all children with problems of learning are children with learning disabilities.

Knowledge and experience generally accepted that too according to the results of research that teachers' perceptions of students with special needs are actually fun, but they do not have a source of special education adequate and inadequate training for work in the field of learning for children with special needs, plus anxiety and the pressures when dealing with children with special needs.

Knowledge and experience of teachers that student with specific learning disabilities is included in students who have cognitive barriers. This result in

that they have not been able to provide professional handling. The implication of elementary school teachers needs training for handling children with specific learning disabilities, especially children and treatment for children with special needs in elementary schools in general. The teachers are trained professionally about learning for children with special needs. Professional demands of a teacher for dealing with children with special needs is a must because the professional duties of a teacher "to be effective in pedagogical and didactic" [16] [17].

Teachers' knowledge and experience of children with specific learning difficulties or children with learning disabilities that have not been properly this will also result in the implementation of the tasks teachers have not fulfilled the task professionally. Teacher professional duties to be fulfilled, because that the teacher is very influential on teaching-learning process.[1][2].This has become a source of frustration for the teachers themselves and the students concerned. Disappointment itself will cause that their students will be burdensome task learning disabilities teacher. It was similar views advocated by stating that formed earlier beliefs and principles are part and parcel of student teachers' personality. Perceptions and expectations of profession form highlighting the belief that beliefs are formed due to accumulation of prior experiences in the home and at school [16]. As a result of mutually sequential and the continuing need to look for solutions with the guidance and training to inclusive primary school teachers. This is understandable because of the knowledge that has been acquired previously, not the right. As a result, teachers prioritize actions with the approach of accommodation, for a special accommodation measures to simplify the material is easy and the main action. The action is easier in an inclusive classroom learning is the use of curriculum adaptations. Modifications will be more use of complex actions and this required intensive training for teachers who specialized non-education [19].

The knowledge and experience that teachers in primary school children more children with learning disabilities found that the public is also corroborated by the results of research from a team of researchers from the faculty of Education Chiang May University. Comparison of these results can be discussed that elementary school teachers require formulated comprehensive knowledge about children with special needs and service learning for students with specific learning disabilities or children with learning disabilities .[22].

Teachers have not been perceived correctly that among children with learning difficulties there are

children with specific learning difficulties or children with learning disabilities, so accommodation is more likely to be done by adjusting the curriculum and modifications to the conversion method can be done by teachers on the basis of perceptions they have [16]. Perceptions of teachers maybe also imply that the inclusive school teacher's professional standard cannot be met, so they need to be given a guide that is also done with the use of training.

IV. CONCLUSION

Teachers have not been perceived correctly that among children with learning difficulties there are children with specific learning difficulties or children with learning disabilities, so accommodation is more likely to be done by adjusting the curriculum and modifications to the conversion method can be done by teachers on the basis of perceptions they have. Perceptions of teachers maybe also imply that the inclusive school teacher's professional standard cannot be met so they need to be given a guide that is also done with the use of training.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Acknowledgments are addressed to the Directorate General of Higher Education who has provided funding for research and the Institute for Research and Community Service of the Yogyakarta State University of Yogyakarta that has provided opportunities and facilities for researchers to conduct this research.

REFERENCES

- [1] Akhyak, Mohamad Idrus, Yunus Abubakar (2013). Implementation of Teacher Pedagogy Competence to Optimizing Learners Development in Public Primary School in Indonesia: *International Journal of Education and Research* Vol 1. Nomor 9 September 2013.
- [2] Bhargava, Anupama & Pathy, Miraketan (2011). *Perception of Student Teachers about teaching competence*. American International Journal of Contemporary Research. Vol 1.No.1, Juli 2011.page 77-81.
- [3] Bear . G. , Korterling . L., and Braziel . P. (2006). School completers and noncompleters with Learning Disabilities: Similarities in Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Self and Teachers. *Remedial and Special Education*; September / Oct 2006; 27.5 ; Pro Quest Education Journals pg. 293
- [4] Cook, B.G., et al. (2000) "Teacher's Attitudes Toward Students with Disabilities they Included". *Exceptional Children*. Fall 2000; 67, 1; Pro Quest Education Journals pg. 115.
- [5] Favazza, PC., Phillipsen, L. and Kumar, P.(2000) . " Measuring and Promoting Acceptance of Young Children with Disabilities." *Exceptional Children* ; Summer 2000; 66, 4 ; Pro Quest Education Journals pg. 491
- [6] Foreman, Phil.(2005). *Inclusion in action*. Melbourne Australia: Thomson.
- [7] Fore, R.& Boon. (2006). " Implications of Cooperative Learning and Educational Reform for Students with Mild Disabilities." *Reading Improve -ment ;Spring 2006: 43, 1; Pro Quest Education Journals pg . 3*
- [8] Forlin, C.(2001). Inclusion: Identifying potential stressors for regular class teachers. *Educational Research, 43(3), 235-245*.
- [9] Glaser , R.(1977). *Adaptive Education: Individual Diversity and Learning*. New York , Chicago , San Francisco , Atlanta , Montreal , Toronto , London , Sydney , Dallas : Holt Rinehart and Winston .
- [10]Hallahan, DP.,Kauffman, JM., & Llyod, JW., (1999). *Introduction to learning disabilities (2nd edn)*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- [11] Hallahan. D.P.& Kauffman. J.M. (2003). *Exceptional Learner: Introduction to Special Education*. 9th Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [12] _____.(2011). *Handbook of Special Education*. New York: Roudledge.
- [13] Harwell, J. M. (2001) . *Complete Learning Disabilities Handbook: Ready - to- Use Strategies & Activities for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*. New (2nd ed .) . USA: A Wiley Imprint
- [14] Lackaye, T & Margalit, M. (2006). "Comparison of Achievement, Effort, and Self-Perceptions Among Students with Learning Disabilities and their peers from different achievement groups." *Journal of LD*. Sept/October 2006.
- [15] Lerner, J & Kline, F. (2006) . *Learning Disabilities and Related Disorders : Characteristics and Learning Strategies (10 ed.)*. USA : Houghton Mifflin Company.
- [16] Liakoupoulu, Maria. (2011). The Professional Competence of Teachers: Which qualities, attitudes, skills and knowledge contribute to a teacher's effectiveness: *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 1 No. 21 [Special Issue - December 2011]* 66
- [17] Lopes, J.A. , et al.(2004) . " Teachers' Perception About Teaching Problem Students in Regular Classrooms ." *Education & Treatment of Children* ; November 2004 ; 27 , 4 ; Pro Quest Education Journals pg . 394
- [18] Maag.J.&Reid.R. (2006) . " Depression Among Students with Learning Disabilities : assesing the Risk". *Journal of LD : Jan / February 2006 ; 39.1 ; Pro Quest Education Journals pg.3*
- [19] Parker , B. (2006) . " Instructional Adaptations for Students With Learning Disabilities : An Action Research Project ." *Intervention in School and Clinic . Austin : September 2006.Vol 42, Iss. 1 ; pg. 56 , 3 pgs.*
- [20] Pujaningsih . , et al . (2002) . Guidance 'Smart Plus' to deal with specific learning disabilities in children Berbah District Sleman , Research Report Student Creativity Program (PKM) , Jakarta : Higher Education
- [21] _____. (2007) Children's Services Education learning disabilities in elementary school through Accommo - dation Learning. Thesis. Bandung Model : UPI.
- [22] Sari Rudiwati, Mumpuniarti & Pujaningsih (2015) Elementary school teachers's competence in accomo - dating and modifying learning process of student with learning disabilities in inclusive classroom.
- [23] Smith , D. (1998) . *Inclusion Schools for All Students*. USA: Wadworth Publishing Company.
- [24] Stevens , S. H. (1997) . Adjustments in Classroom Management: Excerpted form Classroom Success for the LD and ADHD [Online] . Available: [http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/teaching_techniques/ class_manage. html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/teaching_techniques/class_manage.html) [2 September 2004]
- [25] Swanson , L. (1999) . Intervention Research for Students with Learning Disabilities: A Meta - Analysis of Treatment Outcomes [online]. University of California, [http:// www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/teaching_techniques/nclcd_s ummit99_improving.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/teaching_techniques/nclcd_summit99_improving.html) [21 November 2016]

- [26] Vaidya, W & Zaslavsky. (2000). " Inclusion Classrooms : Knowledge versus Pedagogy . Teacher education reform effort for". Fall 2000; 121.1; Education Pro Quest Journals Pg.145
- [27] Westerlund, D. (2006). "Effect of Peer Mentors on Work - Related Performance of Adolescents With Behavioral and/or Learning Disabilities". Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions; Fall 2006: 8.4 ; Pro quest Education Journals pg. 244.
- [28] Yuen, M. , Westwood , P. , Wong , G. , (2004). "Meeting the needs of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties in the Mainstream Education System: Data From Primary School Teachers in Hong Kong". The International Journal of Special Education.2004 , Vol 20, No.1.