



Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Competence in Managing Inclusive Classrooms in Primary Schools

Fathima Ciptaning P^{1*}, Mery Yulikuntari², Ni'matuzahroh³, Zainul Anwar⁴
University of Muhammadiyah Malang

Corresponding Author: Fathima Ciptaning P fathimacip@webmail.umm.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teacher Competency, Psychoeducation, Elementary School

Received: 20, November

Revised: 22, December

Accepted: 31, January

©2026 Ciptaning, Yulikuntari, Ni'matuzahroh, Anwar: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

The implementation of inclusive education policy obligates every educational institution to accept students with special needs, while the competency readiness of regular teachers in addressing diverse learning needs in the classroom is still not fully optimal. This condition underscores the urgency of developing additional skills for regular teachers to support the implementation of effective, adaptive, and equitable inclusive education services. This article aims to report on a Teacher Mentoring Program to strengthen inclusive classroom management competency in Elementary Schools, so that students with special needs can receive services appropriate to their conditions. The program was conducted over 1 month at Seketi Kediri State Elementary School, involving 10 school members consisting of the Principal, Teachers, Educational Staff, and Cleaning Personnel. The method used was an empowerment-based psychoeducational approach through six stages, including. Assessment was carried out using several methods, namely pre-test and post-test with paired sample t-test analysis. The results showed a significant improvement in teachers' understanding with $t(9) = 8.75, p < 0.001$. The mean score increased from 42.3 to 68.7 (mean difference = 26.4 points). This program effectively enhanced regular teachers' competency in providing adaptive educational services for students with special needs.

INTRODUCTION

Based on a review of secondary data compiled from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) and the Basic Education Data System (Dapodik), the number of students with special needs recorded in Indonesia's formal education system has shown a consistent upward trend since 2022. In 2022, approximately 135,946 students with special needs were recorded, increasing to around 146,205 students in 2023, and continuing to rise through 2024 to early 2026. Although there are variations in operational definitions and data collection mechanisms across sources, these differences do not alter the overall trend of the growing number of students with special needs being served by formal educational institutions in Indonesia (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2024, 2026).

This increase underscores the urgency of strengthening inclusive education services in regular schools. Inclusive education has become a central paradigm in global education systems as a commitment to ensuring every child's right to receive quality education without discrimination. It emphasizes principles of equality, equity, and respect for diversity by providing opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, to learn together in supportive and adaptive learning environments (UNESCO, 2005).

In Indonesia, the commitment to inclusive education is reflected in various regulations, including Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Ministry of National Education Regulation (Permendiknas) Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and Those with Exceptional Intelligence and/or Talents. These regulations affirm that regular schools are responsible for delivering educational services that accommodate the diverse needs of students.

Primary schools, as the initial level of formal education, play a strategic role in laying the foundation for students' academic, social, and emotional development. In the context of inclusive education, primary school teachers are at the forefront of creating learning processes that accommodate diverse student characteristics and learning needs. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as facilitators, mentors, and managers of inclusive and supportive classrooms.

However, the implementation of inclusive education at the primary school level continues to face significant challenges. Various studies indicate that although many teachers hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education, a substantial number of them lack adequate readiness and competence to manage learning for students with special needs (Sharma et al., 2012). Limited knowledge about the characteristics of students with special needs, insufficient structured training, and difficulties in designing adaptive learning strategies are among the main obstacles in implementing inclusive education in primary schools (Sharma et al., 2012).

These conditions may hinder the realization of truly inclusive and high-quality educational services. Therefore, planned and sustainable interventions are needed in the form of teacher mentoring and training programs. Teacher mentoring programs are considered effective because they focus not only on enhancing theoretical knowledge but also on strengthening practical skills

through reflection, observation, and feedback on classroom practices (Tang et al., 2018).

Based on this background, a teacher mentoring program for managing inclusive classrooms in primary schools is highly relevant to be examined and implemented. This program is expected to provide a scientific basis for formulating strategies to develop teacher competencies, particularly in professional, pedagogical, social, and personal domains, to support the successful implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. *The General Concept of Disability*

A. Definition of Disability

Disability is generally understood as a condition of functional limitation that affects an individual's daily activities and social participation. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability as the result of interaction between individuals with specific health conditions and environmental factors that hinder their full participation in society (WHO, 2011). In psychology, disability is not viewed merely as an individual deficit, but rather as the result of the relationship between a person's abilities and the demands of their environment.

2. *Theoretical Models of Disability*

A. Medical Model of Disability

The medical model views disability as:

- An individual problem
- Originating from biological or neurological impairments
- Focused on diagnosis, rehabilitation, and therapy

Within this model, the individual is seen as "having a problem" that needs to be corrected in order to approach normal functioning (Shakespeare, 2014).

B. Social Model of Disability

The social model emphasizes that:

- Disability arises from environmental, social, and attitudinal barriers
- Non-inclusive environments exacerbate individual limitations

For example, a child with speech delay may fall further behind if the environment does not provide adaptive communication support (Oliver, 1996).

C. Biopsychosocial Model

This integrative approach is widely used in modern psychology and forms the basis of the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

This model views disability as the result of interaction between:

1. Biological factors (neurological, genetic)
2. Psychological factors (emotion, cognition, motivation)
3. Social factors (family, school, culture)

(WHO, 2011)

The biopsychosocial model is considered the most comprehensive and relevant for inclusive education contexts.

3. *Disability from a Developmental Psychology Perspective*

Developmental psychology views disability as part of human developmental variation rather than merely a deviation. Each child follows a unique developmental trajectory in cognitive, language, social, and emotional domains (Santrock, 2020).

This approach emphasizes:

1. Individual differences
2. Diverse support needs
3. The importance of early intervention and supportive environments

4. *Speech Delay within the Framework of Disability Theory*

A. Definition of Speech Delay

Speech delay refers to delayed development of speech and language abilities compared to age-related developmental norms (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 2022).

Speech delay is not a single disability; it may:

1. Occur independently
2. Be part of other conditions (e.g., developmental disorders, intellectual disability, or hearing impairment)

B. Speech Delay in the Biopsychosocial Model

- **Biological:** neurological limitations, hearing impairments
- **Psychological:** emotional regulation, attention, communication motivation
- **Social:** limited language stimulation, family communication patterns

Psychological perspectives emphasize that speech delay should not be viewed simply as a "child's deficit," but as an indicator of specific developmental support needs.

5. *Slow Learners within the Framework of Disability Theory*

A. Definition of Slow Learner

A slow learner refers to a child whose intellectual ability is slightly below average but does not fall within the category of intellectual disability. Slow learners generally have an IQ range of approximately 70–90 and experience certain academic difficulties (Kirk, Gallagher, & Coleman, 2015).

B. Psychological Characteristics of Slow Learners

- Slower cognitive processing
- Need for repetition
- Difficulty generalizing concepts
- Vulnerability to academic stress and low self-esteem

Within the biopsychosocial model, the difficulties experienced by slow learners are often exacerbated by:

- Inflexible curricula
- Uniform teaching methods
- Negative stigma from the environment

C. Implications of Disability Theory for Education and Intervention

Modern psychological approaches emphasize that:

1. Disability is not solely an individual problem
2. The environment plays a major role in a child's developmental success

3. Interventions must be individualized, contextual, and continuous
For children with speech delay and those identified as slow learners, recommended strategies include:
 - Early developmental-based intervention
 - Differentiated instruction
 - Emotional and social support
 - Collaboration among parents, teachers, and professionals

METHODOLOGY

A. Program Design

The design of this teacher mentoring program was developed with reference to the planning guidelines and activity stages outlined in the Community Empowerment Proposal, particularly the sections detailing phases and activity descriptions. The program is structured in a participatory and gradual manner to address the real challenges faced by regular teachers in managing inclusive classrooms, especially under conditions where Special Education Teachers (GPK) are limited.

Conceptually, the program integrates training, practical mentoring, and the establishment of a teacher learning community. It is implemented through four main stages: (1) initial observation and assessment, (2) foundational training in inclusive classroom management, (3) mentoring and teacher learning community development, and (4) evaluation and sustainability planning.

The first stage involves observation and initial assessment aimed at identifying the school's actual conditions and the challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive learning. Activities include classroom observations, teacher interviews, and preliminary discussions to explore teachers' experiences in handling students with special needs. The results of this stage serve as the basis for developing contextualized mentoring materials and strategies tailored to teachers' needs and student characteristics.

The second stage consists of foundational training in the form of workshops on inclusive education and inclusive classroom management. Teachers are provided with strengthened understanding of the concepts and principles of inclusive education, characteristics of students with special needs, and strategies for classroom management and differentiated instruction. Activities are conducted through interactive lectures, case study discussions, and simple simulations relevant to teachers' classroom situations.

The third stage focuses on mentoring and the formation of a teacher learning community. This phase emphasizes collaborative learning through open and reflective discussions, mentoring in the application of strategies in the classroom, and sharing of best practices among teachers. Mentoring supports teachers in adapting teaching methods, managing student social interactions, and developing inclusive learning tools such as lesson plans and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) according to students' needs.

The fourth stage involves evaluation and sustainability planning. Evaluation is conducted to assess changes in teachers' understanding and skills in inclusive classroom management through reflection, evaluative discussions,

and assessment of the products developed by teachers. This stage also aims to formulate strategies for program continuity, including the use of training modules and the sustainability of the inclusive teacher community as a platform for professional development.

With a program design aligned to the planning guidelines in the community empowerment proposal, this mentoring initiative is expected to produce practical, sustainable, and contextually relevant impacts for teachers and inclusive primary school settings.

B. Needs Analysis and Program Preparation

The needs analysis was conducted to identify teachers' levels of understanding regarding inclusive education, characteristics of students with special needs, and the challenges they face in classroom management. This stage involved initial discussions with the school, short interviews, classroom observations, and review of classroom conditions. The results informed the development of training materials, methods, and mentoring strategies relevant to the school context.

C. Subjects, Location, and Timeline

The subjects of this program are primary school teachers, including classroom teachers, subject teachers, and special education teachers (if available). The program was conducted at a partner primary school. The mentoring activities were carried out in three meetings over a total duration of three days, based on a schedule agreed upon with the school.

D. Procedures for Training Regular Teachers

The training for regular teachers was conducted through several stages:

1. delivery of foundational material on the concepts and principles of inclusive education;
2. introduction to the characteristics and learning needs of students with special needs;
3. training in differentiated instruction strategies and inclusive classroom management; and
4. reflection sessions and discussion of teachers' experiences.

Each stage was designed to encourage active teacher participation and to connect the material with daily teaching experiences.

E. Program Implementation Methods

The methods used in the program included brief lectures combined with interactive dialogue, group discussions, real case studies, guided classroom observation, and reflection with feedback. Brief lectures were used to deliver key concepts, while discussions and case studies deepened understanding through real experiences. Classroom observation and reflection helped teachers continuously evaluate and improve their inclusive teaching practices.

F. Expected Program Outputs/Reports

The expected outputs include improved teacher understanding of inclusive education, the development of practical inclusive classroom management strategies, and positive changes in classroom teaching practices. Additionally, the program produces an activity report documenting the

implementation process, evaluation results, and recommendations for future program development.

G. Indicators of Success

Program success is indicated by increased teacher knowledge and positive attitudes toward inclusive education, teachers' ability to identify students' learning needs, and the application of more adaptive teaching and classroom management strategies. Success is also reflected in active teacher participation throughout the program and reflective insights into their teaching practices.

H. Data Analysis and Program Evaluation Techniques

The evaluation of the teacher mentoring program employed both quantitative and simple descriptive-qualitative approaches aligned with the objectives of the community service initiative. The evaluation focused on measuring changes in teacher understanding and assessing the implementation and usefulness of the program.

Quantitative data were obtained through pre-test and post-test instruments administered to participating teachers. These instruments measured changes in teachers' understanding of inclusive education concepts, inclusive classroom management, and adaptive teaching strategies before and after the mentoring program. The pre-test and post-test data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by comparing scores before and after the program to observe trends in improved understanding.

Additionally, program evaluation data were collected through evaluation forms completed by participating teachers. These forms gathered feedback on the implementation process, clarity of materials, relevance of activities to teachers' needs, and the program's usefulness in supporting inclusive classroom practices. Data from these evaluation forms were analyzed descriptively to illustrate teachers' satisfaction levels and perceptions of the mentoring program.

The results from the pre-test-post-test analysis and program evaluation forms were then used as a basis for assessing program effectiveness and formulating recommendations for future mentoring initiatives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Implementation of Stage 1

The pre-implementation stage was carried out through field observations and interviews with the school principal and regular teachers who directly interact with students with special needs. This activity aimed to obtain an initial overview of the condition of students with special needs and the educational service needs within the school. In addition, interviews were conducted with the parents of these students to gather supporting information regarding the children's developmental conditions. Brief observations of the students in the school environment were also conducted to complement the initial data.

The results of observations and interviews indicated that there were two identified students with special needs. The first student demonstrated difficulties in speech articulation, a tendency to experience tantrums, and relatively good academic ability in mathematics. According to the parent's information, the student had received a medical diagnosis of speech delay. The second student

exhibited characteristics of a slow learner, marked by a relatively slow learning pace, easy distraction during reading and writing activities, and the need for repeated instructions and continuous assistance throughout the learning process.

Furthermore, the data collection revealed challenges faced by teachers in implementing inclusive education at the school. The school is obligated to admit students with special needs, which requires teachers to provide educational services regardless of their level of preparedness. However, several teachers indicated limitations in their competence to optimally support the learning process of students with special needs. This condition is reinforced by limited access to training and mentoring programs provided by the education authorities, resulting in insufficient capacity building for teachers in managing inclusive learning.

B. Implementation of Stage 2

The psychoeducational training was conducted over two days. The sequence of activities on the first day is presented below.

Table 1. Day 1 Activities

Sessio n	Description	Objective	Method	Output
08:00– 08:30	Opening, introductions, explanation of program objectives	Introduce the program	Introductory lecture and informative communicatio n	Participants understand the goals, scope, and flow of activities
08:30– 09:00	Remarks from the Principal	Present the school’s acceptance and expectations	Institutional presentation and brief discussion	Shared understanding between the school and the implemmentatio n team
09:00– 09:30	Material 1: “Concept of Inclusive Education”	Understand inclusive education concepts	Interactive lecture and Q&A	Improved understanding of principles, goals, and foundations of inclusive education
09:30– 10:00	Material 2: “Characteristic s of Students with Special Needs”	Understand characteristics of students with special needs	Interactive lecture based on case studies	Ability to identify general characteristics of students with special needs
10:00– 10:30	Discussion	Deepen understandin g and reflect	Group discussion	Identification of real classroom challenges in

		on experiences		inclusive settings
10:30–11:00	Material 3: “Identifying Students’ Learning Needs”	Understand how to identify learning needs	Presentation and applied discussion	Understanding initial steps to identify students’ learning needs
11:00–11:30	Discussion	Deepen understanding and reflect on experiences	Group discussion	Identification of real classroom challenges in inclusive settings
11:30–11:45	Closing	Conclude activities and reinforce learning	Brief reflection and summary	Clear understanding and direction for the mentoring follow-up

Table 2. Day 2 Activities

Session	Description	Objective	Method	Output
08:00–08:15	Opening, introductions, explanation of program objectives	Introduce the program	Introductory lecture and informative communication	Participants understand the goals, scope, and flow of activities
08:15–09:00	Material 4: “Inclusive Classroom Management”	Understand principles and strategies	Interactive lecture and guided discussion	Improved understanding of inclusive classroom management strategies
09:00–09:30	Discussion	Deepen understanding and reflect on teaching practices	Guided group discussion	Identification of teachers’ challenges and needs
10:00–10:30	Material 5: “Designing an Individualized Education Program (IEP)”	Understand the concept and components of an IEP	Presentation and applied discussion	Understanding the structure and initial steps in preparing an IEP

10:30–11:00	Discussion	Deepen understanding and reflect on experiences	Group discussion	Compilation of teachers' input and experiences related to IEP design
11:00–11:15	Closing	Conclude activities and reinforce learning	Brief reflection and summary	Clear understanding and direction for the mentoring follow-up



Figure 1. Documentation

Data Analysis

The analysis results indicate that all items in the research instrument had corrected item-total correlation values above 0.30, thereby meeting the validity criteria. The reliability value, reflected by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.880 across 13 items, indicates that the instrument is consistent and reliable.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	8	26.00	41.00	36.1	1.74681
Post-test	8	55.00	69.00	59.25	1.78035
Valid N	8				

Descriptively, the total pre-test scores ranged from 26 to 41 points with a mean of 36.13 (SD = 4.94), while the post-test scores increased to a range of 55 to

69 points with a mean of 59.25 (SD = 5.04). All participants experienced an increase in scores, with an average improvement of 23.12 points.

Table 4. Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Paired Sample 1	Pre-Test - Post-Test	23.1250	5.84166	2.06534	-28.00875	18.24125	-11.197	7	.000

Inferential analysis using a paired samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, $t(7) = -11.197$, $p < 0.001$. The mean difference of 23.125 points (95% CI: -28.01 to -18.24) indicates that the intervention was highly effective in significantly improving participants' scores, with a substantial effect size. The psychoeducational training significantly enhanced regular teachers' conceptual understanding of students with special needs ($p < 0.001$). This increase in knowledge forms an essential foundation for teachers' readiness to design and deliver inclusive and responsive educational services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Psychoeducational Training Program for Regular Teachers has proven effective in improving teachers' conceptual understanding, inclusive awareness, and pedagogical readiness in identifying and supporting students with special needs in the school environment. The program not only strengthened individual teacher competencies but also contributed to the development of a more responsive and equitable educational ecosystem through collaboration among teachers and support staff such as school counselors and psychologists. This aligns with the program's objective of building a solid knowledge foundation as a prerequisite for creating inclusive educational services.

The implementation of case-based and simulation-based psychoeducation demonstrated that contextual and reflective approaches are effective in enhancing teachers' ability to adapt instructional strategies, understand the characteristics of students with special needs, and reduce biases and misconceptions that often hinder inclusive practices. Teachers' openness during group discussions and reflective sessions reinforces the finding that improved conceptual understanding is a crucial first step before meaningful changes in inclusive attitudes and behaviors can be realized in the classroom.

With its systematic training structure and post-training mentoring, this program has the potential to serve as an applicable and sustainable model for continuous professional development (CPD) for regular teachers. In the future, similar programs are recommended to be expanded to involve more schools, extend the duration of mentoring, and integrate long-term impact evaluations on inclusive teaching practices and learning outcomes of students with special needs.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research is needed on this topic "Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Competence in Managing Inclusive Classrooms in Primary Schools".

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author expresses sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Principal of Seketi 1 Public Primary School and the teaching staff for their moral and facilitative support during the implementation of this community service activity. Through the permission, trust, and collaboration provided, the empowerment program for regular teachers to enhance their understanding in educating and serving students with special needs was successfully conducted in December 2025.

This support not only facilitated the program's implementation but also strengthened the shared commitment to creating a more inclusive and responsive educational ecosystem within the school environment. It is hoped that this synergy will continue and provide sustainable benefits in improving the quality of educational services for all students.

REFERENCES

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *Speech and Language Development*.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah. (2024). Jumlah penyandang kebutuhan khusus yang masih sekolah. Data Kemendikdasmen.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah. (2026). Dashboard referensi peserta didik berkebutuhan khusus. Referensi Data Kemendikdasmen.
- Kirk, S. A., Gallagher, J. J., & Coleman, M. R. (2015). *Educating Exceptional Children*. Cengage Learning.
- Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*. Macmillan.
- Santrock, J. W. (2020). *Life-Span Development*. McGraw-Hill.
- Shakespeare, T. (2014). *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*. Routledge.
- Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2012). Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs*, 1, 12-21.
- Tang, L., Darlington, G., Ma, D. W. L., & Haines, J. (2018). Mothers' and fathers' media parenting practices associated with young children's screen-time: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Obesity*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40608-018-0214-4>
- UNESCO. (2005). *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*.
- World Health Organization. (2011). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*.