

## COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS TO SUPPORT SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN IN OUR DREAM INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Education for children with special needs in Indonesia continues to face numerous challenges. Despite the increasing number of children with disabilities, resources to meet the needs of schools and institutions remain inadequate. This study aims to analyze the training needs of teaching staff to support the handling of children with disabilities at Our Dream Indonesia. The research is a case study with a qualitative descriptive approach. The study involved three managers and 21 accompanying teachers as informants. Open-ended questionnaires and interview forms were used as instruments. Qualitative descriptive analysis was employed as the data analysis technique. The collected data was divided into three parts: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicated that children with disabilities at Our Dream Indonesia have diverse characteristics, including varying cognitive, physical, and social-emotional abilities. The teaching staff at Our Dream Indonesia requires training in several areas, including learning strategies for children with disabilities, educational technology, collaboration with parents and professionals, behavior management for children with disabilities, and implementation of the ABA method. The achievement of training can be measured through various methods, such as observation, tests, portfolios, and feedback. Therefore, Our Dream Indonesia should invest in training and professional development for teaching staff to ensure that children with disabilities receive a quality education that meets their needs.*

**KEYWORDS** *Training Needs, Teaching Staff, Children With Special Needs*



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### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right that must be provided by the government to every citizen, including children with special needs, as regulated by the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. To provide education rights to children with special needs, increased attention to these

**How to cite:** Isra Al Aqsha, Mario Emilzoli. (2024). Competence of Teachers to Support Special Needs Children in Our Dream Indonesia. *Journal Eduvest*. 4 (5): 3980-3992  
**E-ISSN:** 2775-3727  
**Published by:** <https://greenpublisher.id/>

children is required. Children with special needs (ABK) are those who have unique characteristics different from typical children, thus requiring special education services. In Indonesia, the number of ABK continues to increase, estimated to reach 2.03% of the total population of children aged 0-18 years (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). The increasing number of ABK poses challenges for the education sector, especially regarding the readiness of teachers to handle ABK.

The implementation of education for children with special needs requires teachers who have the necessary abilities required by specific schools/institutions. Teachers with competencies in handling children with special needs undoubtedly undergo specialized training continuously (Andiema, 2021). Teachers without adequate training in ABK may lack the knowledge and skills needed to meet the learning needs of ABK. This can result in ABK not receiving optimal education and falling behind their peers (Mirnawati & Damastuti, 2019). According to Anggriana and Trisnani (2016), teachers are responsible for seeking assistance in identifying and providing educational services to all children, especially in assisting ABK students.

Fundamentally, training plays a crucial role in all learning activities that can enhance teacher quality, subsequently improving student learning outcomes and generating innovation in learning development, media, teaching materials, and curriculum (Leonard & Wibawa, 2020). Training needs analysis is conducted to obtain information about the conditions and needs of employees in carrying out their respective duties, and it is a method to determine whether there is a need for training and the type of training needed to fill those gaps (Sundari & Kusmiati, 2022), as this analysis assists organizations and individuals in finding solutions to improve performance. Sukmawati and Tarmizi (2022) stated that the purpose of conducting needs assessment is to prevent obstacles and address problems in specific institutions. Hartoyo and Efendy (2017) explained that properly conducted training needs analysis can ensure solutions to problems and focus resources, time, and efforts on solutions effectively. Training needs analysis conducted within an institution can identify groups or individuals that need training and pinpoint the exact training needed (Herwina, 2021).

Research by Nurhalim and Puspita (2021) found the results of training needs analysis to be crucial in an organization's interests and helpful in effectively utilizing existing resources and preventing unnecessary training. This is supported by Kartika (2022), who stated that efforts to improve human resources through training according to employee needs can be more effective and efficient, enhancing competence and competitiveness when training is conducted periodically. Another study by Ediyanto et al. (2021) showed significant changes for teachers who participated in this inclusive school teacher capacity-building program, as demonstrated in the comparison table of pre-test and post-test results. The average score before the activity (pre-test) was <60, namely 54.67. Meanwhile, the average score after participating in the activity (post-test) was >60, namely 80.56. This indicates that training activities, especially for inclusive educators, are crucial and indeed have an impact on the learning process for children with special needs. One independent institution providing education for inclusive children is the Our Dream

Indonesia Center for the Growth and Development Therapy of Children with Special Needs.

Our Dream Indonesia is an independent institution with a functional concept, which is the development of skills that support daily life according to age, as well as optimizing the level of ability and independence of each individual; an integration concept that utilizes all elements of the special needs children's education curriculum from the Ministry of Education to support children's development; and a collaborative concept through collaboration with various parties with the aim of consistency in addressing individuals with special needs. The education process uses the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) method, a psychological educational approach used to aid the learning process in the Autism spectrum (Mujiraharjo, 2020).

Handling children with special needs is one of the major challenges in the education system at Our Dream Indonesia. Teachers are a crucial component in this process as it requires high skills and abilities to effectively support ABK. Preliminary studies in the institution have shown that several training efforts have been made, but there are still shortcomings in terms of the use of educational technology, behavior management, and collaboration with parents and professionals. Most of the accompanying teachers at Our Dream Indonesia have undergone competency training that strengthens teacher skills through online training. Another obstacle is that more than 50% of accompanying teachers have less than 5 years of experience teaching ABK.

The purpose of this research is to determine the competency conditions possessed by teachers at Our Dream Indonesia and what needs to be improved to support teacher capabilities, the training processes that can be used to support these competencies, and the forms of assessment that can measure the achievement of training. Appropriate training is the key to improving teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and innovation in learning.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The type of research used is a case study with a qualitative descriptive approach. The data collected consists of qualitative data gathered according to the research focus, including words, actions, situations, documentation, and events observed through observation, interviews, and documentation, supplemented with instruments to obtain data collected based on facts relevant to the type of data used. The research instrument uses an open-ended questionnaire designed to collect specific yet flexible data for additional qualitative data analysis to understand the subjects' perspectives, as well as interviews using a guide to ensure all questions asked are more consistent and structured.

The processing of collected data is done manually to improve unclear data or errors in recording and storing information, starting with a review of available data from various sources written in field notes, whether personal documents or official documents. The research data is then analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques following the concepts provided by Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2020), which suggest qualitative data analysis conducted interactively and continuously at each stage of the research so that the data is sufficient.

The activities in analyzing the collected data are divided into three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, all data obtained in the field are summarized, then the main points are selected, focusing on data considered important, creating themes, and determining patterns to provide a clearer picture and facilitate further data collection and information retrieval if necessary. With a qualitative descriptive approach, data obtained through interviews will be verified and then compiled in the form of interview summaries consisting of specific findings and the preparation of narrative manuscripts to build the theoretical framework or research concept.

Information collection is done through the distribution of open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and documentation analysis - informants in this study consist of 21 accompanying teachers of ABK, 2 managers of the Our Dream Indonesia institution, and 1 psychologist.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on observations and interviews with educators and administrators at Our Dream Indonesia, an analysis of training needs required to handle special needs children has been conducted as outlined below.

### **Learning Process**

Every child with special needs (ABK) has different characteristics in terms of learning ability, learning style, and learning needs. Observations and interviews with administrators and educators at Our Dream Indonesia revealed characteristics of ABK that affect the teaching and learning process, including differences in cognitive ability, physical ability, as well as emotional and social ability. Some children may lag behind in cognitive abilities while others may excel. Most children in the institution experience problems with weak motor and sensory abilities – physical inability like this can be a barrier to the learning process (Daroni et al., 2018). Moreover, most ABK experience behavioral problems such as aggression or anxiety, as well as difficulties in interaction and communication with people around them, whether it's friends or others; these difficulties can also hinder the teaching and learning process (Saputri et al., 2017).

Diverse characteristics of ABK require varied teaching strategies and methods. Educators need to understand the individual characteristics of each child and tailor their teaching to meet their needs. Some learning strategies that educators need to have to accommodate the characteristics of each child include differentiated learning, accommodations, and behavior modification. Implementing differentiated learning can be done by providing different learning materials and tasks to each child according to their abilities. Educators can make changes to the learning environment and learning aids to meet the needs of children, and to modify behavior, educators can help children develop social and emotional skills through collaboration with parents. Another thing to note is the implementation of the ABA curriculum adapted to the curriculum from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud) as well as preparing appropriate learning program plans and the availability of learning tools. Strengthening learning strategies can be done through training and education for educators on learning methods tailored to the intelligence

levels of ABK, learning methods to accommodate ABK learning styles more comprehensively and sustainably (Khairiyah et al., 2019).

### **Competency of Educators**

Observations and interviews conducted at Our Dream Indonesia highlight several challenges faced by educators in handling special needs children (ABK), namely 35% of educators have less than five years of teaching experience. Educators at Our Dream Indonesia have not received specific training in pedagogy (Hadi, 2018). Types of training attended include handling ABK using the ABA system and training on the use of instructional media. Training attended by educators at Our Dream Indonesia is mostly through online workshops and seminars.

Based on interviews with administrators at Our Dream Indonesia, weaknesses identified in educators include inconsistency in providing situational stimulation and handling techniques for children according to their individual characteristics. This indicates the need for broad and focused competency improvement in pedagogy and interaction with children (Sappaile, 2017). Administrators at Our Dream Indonesia emphasize that there are several important competencies that need to be improved to support educators' abilities. One of them is vocational skills given that the majority of students are in the adolescent to adult age range. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen educators' character in interacting with children. Other competencies that need to be improved include ABK handling techniques, collaboration, effective communication, problem-solving, as well as innovation and creativity.

### **Training Needs**

Training programs organized must align with competency standards to meet the needs of the job market (customer). Therefore, to provide quality service and focus on satisfaction to the general public and industry, every training program needs to conduct an analysis of the training needs required by ABK educators. The analysis of training needs required by educators to support the handling of special needs children encompasses important aspects related to pedagogical skills. Information obtained from interviews with educators and administrators at Our Dream Indonesia is as follows:

#### **1. ABK Learning Strategies**

The majority of educators at Our Dream Indonesia state that suitable learning strategies for special needs children are the most important skill for educators, indicating the need for training in developing learning strategies tailored to these children's needs. Learning for children with special needs requires unique strategies tailored to each individual's needs. Learning strategies are instructional procedures to assist students' learning efforts, organize learning experiences, arrange and plan teaching materials, thus creating a more effective and efficient learning process to achieve learning goals (Nuraini, 2023). Learning strategies can include the use of effective methods to facilitate children's learning. Some strategies educators can use to handle ABK include individualized approaches related to understanding that each ABK has unique needs. Training for these learning strategies focuses on curriculum adjustment

and learning strategies according to individual needs, effective teaching and learning processes for ABK, and includes using available learning strategies for children, various learning techniques to accommodate different learning styles, and utilizing educational technology aids and special learning tools to support ABK needs (Hadi, 2018; Winarsih, 2015; Asari, 2023). According to Herwina (2021), there are many learning strategies including inquiry, expository, group, individual, behavior modification, cooperative, inductive, deductive, and others that can be used by educators for teaching in inclusive classrooms – for example, teachers can use biogenetic, attitude, psychodynamic, and ecological learning strategies for students with disabilities. Research by Rosnita et al. (2022) shows that effective learning strategies for one type of learning challenge can have potential for providing learning to participants with other special needs or challenges.

## 2. **Use of Educational Technology**

Observations conducted indicate that educators at Our Dream Indonesia have not received training in the use of educational technology specifically for special needs children. The world of technology continues to evolve with new innovations that can support children's education (Mulyadi, 2022). Technology plays a crucial role in the education of special needs children in Indonesia, and appropriate technology supports ABK for mobility and effective and efficient learning media so that educational goals can be achieved according to government curriculum (Humairok & Widyastono, 2020). Training in this regard is important because technological advancements have opened new opportunities to support ABK learning. This training may include the use of software, applications, or other technologies that enhance learning. Training in the use of educational technology in the learning process for special needs children is considered important as it can help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning. Educational technology has several implications in learning such as improving educational productivity, reducing teacher workload, and facilitating the learning process. The use of technology in education can also make learners more comfortable, less bored, and help them access broader and new information. Such training can also serve as a means for educators to develop their abilities in using educational technology, thus helping children to engage in learning more easily and achieve their goals. The use of educational software, specialized learning applications for ABK, or other assistive technologies can enhance children's engagement and learning performance (Musfira et al., 2022). Support from the government, school supervisors, and teacher training is key to the successful implementation of educational technology in the curriculum and enables better learning personalization. Research by Lutfio et al. (2023) indicates that through appropriate training, teachers can use technology to adapt learning materials to individual needs including learning styles, abilities, and interests. Training in educational technology is an important investment in improving the quality of learning and learning experiences, enhancing inclusivity and participation in modern education.

## 3. **Collaboration with Parents and Professionals**

Educators at Our Dream Indonesia require training in collaboration with parents and other professional experts. This is important to ensure that the learning approach applied at school is also reinforced and consistently applied at home and in other environments. This collaboration is considered necessary in the formation of inclusive education improvement because parental involvement is one of the most important factors in the educational process for children (Basnet & Gautam, 2022). Teachers and parents should strive to take steps towards cooperation and collaboration, which can also help children identify the problems they face and in the therapy and realization processes. Collaboration training can include effective communication strategies, understanding child needs from various perspectives, providing support and resources for parents, and coordinating interdisciplinary services (Sugihartatik, 2019). Collaboration between educators, parents, therapists, and professional experts is crucial in handling ABK, and this approach ensures that all parties involved understand the needs and learning goals of children comprehensively and work together to achieve them (Basnet & Gautam, 2022). This training can strengthen parental involvement in their children's education and reinforce collaboration between teachers, parents, therapists, and other professionals in supporting ABK learning needs. Such collaboration has several benefits including providing information to educators on how to handle children, sharing experiences with speakers in teacher-led seminars and other training services, collaborating with other schools for inclusive education development, and integrating input and suggestions from parents and professionals in developing ABK education programs.

4. **Behavior Management and Assessment Systems**

Another training need is behavior management as well as assessment and assessment for special needs children. In-depth understanding of individual needs and abilities is a crucial step in planning and developing appropriate learning programs. Behavior management training can help educators manage behaviors that may be barriers to the learning process, and includes understanding basic behavior management principles, using positive reinforcement, arranging learning environments, and handling challenging behavior techniques. This training provides an in-depth understanding of various types of special needs that ABK may have, such as autism, developmental disorders, sensory disorders, and others. This helps teachers to identify and respond to individual learning needs accurately (Sholawati, 2019). Types of behavior management training that educators can attend include character education management, inclusive education management, and self-development management. In these trainings, educators learn behaviors that can be applied in inviting, guiding, and exemplifying interactions such as social interaction, learning, and focusing on instruction. Teachers are also provided with materials on inclusive education, exceptional education, and special education which are solutions to solving educational fulfillment rights problems (Liani et al., 2021) – such training will help teachers develop the necessary competencies to overcome different challenges, and this will help teachers become competent, responsible, skilled, and highly dedicated educators, as behavior



management training will help teachers develop the necessary competencies. Appropriate assessment and assessment can provide in-depth understanding of individual needs and progress and guide planning and development of learning programs, and includes the use of appropriate assessment tools and techniques, interpretation, and use of information for effective intervention design and learning programs (Istiarsyah, 2019; Ningtyas, 2020). Practical training in behavior management implementation includes positive reinforcement approaches, environmental arrangement techniques, effective classroom management, and impulse control strategies (Markaki et al., 2021), as teachers must be able to use appropriate assessment systems for curriculum modifications to measure children's performance including attitudes, written assessments, assignment assessments, and performance assessments.

#### 5. **Method Implementation**

Most educators at Our Dream Indonesia state that the ABA method is considered effective especially for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Educators expect continuous ABA implementation training and according to management, training in this method, both in theory and practice in the field, is important to improve educator competency in handling special needs children, and can also be through team-based teaching in developing learning innovations (Mujiraharjo, 2020). According to Subrata (2018), the Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (A-B-C) approach in the ABA method can help educators understand and respond to child behaviors effectively. Educators can use ABA principles such as positive reinforcement and environmental arrangement to support learning and development of desired social, communication, and behavioral skills. The use of such methods in learning will help children be more effective in learning, control problem behavior, and improve academic skills. This will facilitate better communication, improve language skills, and assist in the development of more independent and skilled individuals. In method implementation training, educators gain the knowledge, skills, and leadership needed to change and control children's success rates in learning, and such training will help educators develop effective learning programs and change children's success rates. The ABA method can also use different educational techniques such as behavioral therapy and education for autistic children that must be implemented continuously, simultaneously, and integrally (Maryanti & Fatimah, 2022). Other methods such as education and teaching for these children using individualized approaches are more focused on education techniques that meet children's needs (Jessy & Diswantika, 2019).

Analyzing the training needs for skill reinforcement among educators of special needs children is crucial to identify areas where they need improvement and support in providing inclusive education. By understanding the training needs for skill reinforcement among educators, they can develop effective learning strategies and align their approaches with the individual needs of the special needs children they teach. Meeting specific teacher needs through training and skill enhancement can lead to successful implementation of inclusive education, ensuring that all



students receive quality education in an inclusive learning environment. By conducting training needs analysis and skill enhancement for special needs educators, educators can identify gaps in their knowledge and abilities. This information can serve as the basis for developing targeted training programs and interventions to support educators in meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities.

### **Measurement of Training Achievement**

Performance evaluations of educators at Our Dream Indonesia are conducted every time there is a monthly meeting discussing the progress of the education program, the development of special needs children, feedback from parents, and other internal institutional elements. Educators who attend training will also be asked for feedback on what they have learned, how they have implemented it in the classroom, and what they still need to learn. Measurement techniques that can be used include monitoring the progress of children after training is provided. Another way is to use standardized tests or other assessment instruments to measure the progress made by children, followed by observation comparing the progress of ABK before and after the training attended by educators. Educators can also be asked to create a CV (curriculum vitae/portfolio) showing their work after training, including lesson plans, teaching materials, videos, or other documentation. (Hartoyo & Efendy, 2017)

Indicators that can be used to measure training achievement include improvements in educators' knowledge and skills, progress of ABK in learning, and improvement in the quality of learning programs. Methods that can be used to measure training achievement include ensuring that the methods used are aligned with the training objectives, using valid instruments, objectively analyzing data, and using measurement results to improve the quality of training. Inclusive teacher performance assessment instruments must be in line with the needs of children and inclusive education practices, as well as with the needs for development and improvement of inclusive education quality.

Training types for educators can also be tailored to the needs and contexts of each educational institution, and it is important to provide holistic and sustainable training for educators to strengthen competencies in supporting the learning and development of ABK, and to encourage educator participation in training and professional development by facilitating training for educators and preparing them in conducive, comfortable, and family-like environments, supplemented with full responsibility for activities conducted by educators for 24 hours per week. Research results from Musfira et al. (2022) show that measurement of training achievement can be done through the following steps: assessment as an integral part of learning activities, preparation and implementation of specific programs, namely special educators who provide guidance at the beginning of meetings, approaching to understand the needs of children, and conducting evaluations at the end of each semester.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our Dream Indonesia needs to invest in training and professional development for educators to ensure that children with special needs (ABK) receive quality education tailored to their needs. Our Dream Indonesia can collaborate with educational institutions and training centres to develop training programs that meet the needs of the educators.

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