

Preparing EFL pre service teachers for inclusive teaching: The students' perception on the outcome-based evaluation of the introduction to inclusive education course

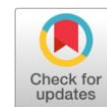
Novera Putri Karina ^{a,1}, Alies Poetri Lintangari ^{b,2,*}, Ive Emaliana ^{c,3}

^a Indonesia English Language Education Department Universitas Brawijaya, Jalan Veteran Malang 65145, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

^{b, c} School of Curriculum, Teaching and Inclusive Education, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

¹ noverakarina@student.ub.ac.id; ² alies.lintangari@monash.edu; ³ ive@ub.ac.id

* corresponding author



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ABSTRACT

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Inclusive Education has been an emerging initiative in Indonesia, yet, the implementation of it in English Language Teaching is less explored. English Language Education Department, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya has initiated the Introduction to Inclusive Education course to prepare students with inclusive teaching competencies. This course has been implemented for 2 years, a course evaluation needs to be carried out to evaluate and improve the course quality. This present study reports the evaluation of the aforementioned course with the Framework of Outcome Based Education from the students' perspective. The survey was distributed to 129 students enrolled in the course. Questionnaires were distributed after students completed the final semester exam in the course. Descriptive analysis was carried out with SPSS to calculate the average score for each aspect. This research revealed that most of the students agreed that this course has met their expectation toward the offered competencies (M=3,25), positive perception toward course activities (M=3,12), positive perception toward the benefits of course materials (M=3,19), and positive perception toward tutor performance (M=3.2). Surprisingly, despite the students' agreement on the usefulness of the courses, they also acknowledged that the course materials are pretty difficult (M=3,15). The result of this course evaluation shed a light on the importance of adjusting the materials to be more achievable by the students so they have confidence in implementing inclusive teaching practices.



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1. Introduction

English is the global language which promises wider opportunities for youth including those with special educational needs. It is imperative that all individuals who are considering learning English as a second language learn it. Many countries include English as a second language in their school syllabus and children start learning English from a young age (Ilyosovna, 2020). Additionally, as the Government of Indonesia regulates the inclusive education in all level of education, number of students with special needs enrolling in general schools are raising for the past 5 years from 62,960 in 2015 to 99,467 by 2020 (Afkar et al., 2020; Hata et al., 2021). Despite the number of students with special educational needs enrolled in general school raising, but their school participation remains declining because of dropping out (Mizunoya et al., 2016). The low quality of teaching and learning

is one of the most challenging barriers in implementing effective inclusive teaching practices (Afkar et al., 2020; Hata et al., 2021; Mizunoya et al., 2016; Poernomo et al., 2016). The quality of teaching and learning is significant to quality education as it serves the effective practical pedagogical practices which ensures the optimal participation of all students regardless their special needs (Dutta, 2017; Javornik & Klemenčič Mirazchyski, 2023; Yao & Lin, 2023). Teacher quality encompassing the characteristics, skills, ability and competencies is the key to ensure the quality of teaching and learning (Pendergast et al., 2023). Therefore, preparing teachers for inclusive teaching practices is equal to ensuring the quality of inclusive education implementation.

In the context of English language teaching, the visible challenges lie on teachers' competences in implementing inclusive teaching practices as the English Education Program have not prepared the prospective teachers with this ability. Several studies have reported several challenges in addressing various learning needs due to the lack of teacher competence in implementing inclusive teaching including competences in designing accessible and inclusive lesson plan, assessment, teaching method (Infantri & Lintang Sari, 2022; Nugroho & Lintang Sari, 2022; Puspitasari, 2019). Those aforementioned challenges emerge as the EFL teachers are not prepared to teach students with diverse needs. The low competence of teachers in implementing inclusive teaching practices will affect their confidence and teaching efficacy (Forlin et al., 2011), whereas teachers attitude and their ability to implement inclusive teaching practices is significant in supporting the students with special needs learning English (Asri & Adrianto, 2021). Furthermore, the quality of teachers is highly guaranteed by the quality teacher education. The effective teacher education program develops the teachers' quality including their competencies, skills, and abilities (Churchward & Willis, 2019). As a program which prepares the future EFL teachers, the English Language Education Study Program (SP-ELE) Faculty of Cultural Studies, Brawijaya University has formulated an elective course called *Introduction to Inclusive Education* to equip students with skills and competencies in inclusive teaching practices (SP-ELE, 2023). This inclusive education initiative is designed to meet the need for inclusive teaching practices in the area of English Language Teaching as results of feedback from alumni and stakeholders as well as to implement Government Regulation number 13 of 2020 which mandates that all study program which prepare teachers should offer course on inclusive education (GoI Regulation Number 13 of 2020 about Reasonable Accommodation for Student with Disability, 2020). The *Introduction to Inclusive Education* course is offered to 6th semester students who are going to conduct teaching practices in school. It is offered in two credits with 16 meetings in one semester to prepares students to implement inclusive teaching practices through 5 learning outcomes; (1) Being able to explain the principles of Inclusive Education in ELT practices; (2) Being able to determine the appropriate curriculum of inclusive teaching practices; (3) Being able to assess the needs to prepare inclusive teaching practices; (4) Being able to plan inclusive English teaching learning processes and (5) Being able to adapt various conventional and ICT based instructional material/media based on accessibility principles. This course equips the students with inclusive teaching skills and knowledge including the concept and definition of inclusive education, disability awareness and etiquette, assessing students' needs, language-based learning disability, language barriers, differentiated instructions, Universal Design Learning, Accessibility Principles, Accommodation Principles and Culturally Responsive Education. This course implemented case method and project-based learning method which aims at equipping students with experiences in collaborative work. Therefore, students can equip themselves with the necessary knowledge to become more adept at implementing inclusive education. Pre-service teachers' attitudes and skills will also improve with relevant and inclusive training (Alzahrani, 2020). In addition, prospective teachers who possess the knowledge of managing behavioral intentions, working with others, and utilizing inclusive teaching will have a distinct advantage over aspiring educators who lack this knowledge.

The course was designed based on Outcomes-based education (OBE). OBE is an educational principle that measure students' performance effectively and advance democratic knowledge management (Japee & Oza, 2021). This means that in the OBE context, education becomes more student-centered, where students are actively involved in the learning process so that the expected competencies are in line with students' needs. As the Indonesia Ministry of Research and Technology and National Research and Innovation Agency also suggest to implement the OBE strategy in higher education as a result of the shift in quality assurance which now focuses on course outcomes. As a result, the study program will produce graduates with skills that are relevant to real world demands, and the institution will produce high quality graduates. Therefore, it is important to evaluate educational programs to realize weaknesses and strengths so that they can improve teaching methods

and effectiveness (Mohammadi, 2021). The implementation of OBE has been well reflected in the graduate profile of SP-ELE which is formulated based on 4 standards, namely study program associations, stakeholder demands, national and international standards and the academic mission which consists of 3 main areas, namely intercultural communication competencies, inclusive teaching competencies and ICT integrations. Therefore, the learning outcomes of *Introduction to Inclusive Education* course was designed based on the graduate profiles and alumni feedbacks. This course has been implemented for two years, but there has been no evaluation. Students perception toward course evaluation is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the course in equipping students with necessary skills (Katawazai, 2021; Akramy, 2021; Amalia et al, 2021). Whereas, learning evaluation is useful for making decisions about the progress of the teaching and learning process (Chalikandy, 2023; Ellis et al., 2021; Shinde, 2022). This helps develop standards for student performance, academic achievement, or student-teacher proportions. Bloemert et al., (2019) consider gaining insight into students' perspectives of foreign language curricula important for designing curricula and preparing lessons. This research addresses the practical gaps of Introduction to Inclusive Education to equip prospective EFL teachers with inclusive teaching competence by evaluating the course delivery through students' perspective. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate the Introduction to Inclusive Education course from a student's perspective based on the OBE framework which measures 5 aspects or course evaluations including Course Expectations, Course Activities, Benefits of Course Material, Tutor Performance and Difficulty of Course Material.

2. Methodology

This research employed quantitative method with survey design to find out students' perspective by inviting 129 students of the Brawijaya University English Language Education Study Program (SP-ELE) who took the Introduction to Inclusive Education (IIE) class and shared their consent to join the survey voluntarily. Questionnaires were distributed online using *Google Form* to students after they completed the final exam. As displayed in table 1, the respondents consisted of 77,5% second year students and 22,5% third year students. They were mostly dominated by female students (72%) than male students (28%).

Table 1. Respondents

Category	Frequency (%)
Academic Year	
Second Year Students	100 (77.5%)
Third Year Students	29 (22.5%)
Gender	
Male	36 (28%)
Female	93 (72%)

The research employed a questionnaire derived from Lixun (2013) as the primary instrument that consists of 15 statements. The questionnaire was clustered into some aspects that contained students' perceptions to simplify the analysis as shown in Table 2.

This research underwent a reliability and validity check showing that the instruments are reliable and valid as the rxy scores exceeded the r value, and Cronbach's and the Cronbach's alpha scores likewise surpassed the r value as seen in table 3 and table 4 below. A descriptive analysis was conducted based on the data processed using SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science) version 25 to calculate the mean score of each aspect.

Table 2. OBE Evaluation Questionnaire Statement

Aspects	Item of Questionnaire
A: Course Expectation	1. The course met my expectation 2. The course met my needs as future English teacher 3. The topics covered were relevant to the course.
B: Course Activities	1. The activities were clearly explained 2. The activities were useful 3. The timing of activities was appropriate for the content 4. The sequence of the activities was right 5. The instructions were clear 6. I provided with many opportunities to interact with fellow students on the course
C: Benefit of Course Material	1. The course material was useful 2. The course Gives an example of how I'll apply what I learned in this course in my job.
D : Tutor Performance	1. The tutor was engaging 2. The tutor provided helpful feedback
E. Course Material Difficulties	1. In this course, I have been challenged to learn more than my expected 2. I have put a great deal of effort into advancing my learning in this course.

Table 3. Validity of Evaluation Questionnaire

No	Rcount	Rtable	Status
1	.726**	0.306	Valid
2	.781**	0.306	Valid
3	.675**	0.306	Valid
4	.669**	0.306	Valid
5	.630**	0.306	Valid
6	.764**	0.306	Valid
7	.792**	0.306	Valid
8	.587**	0.306	Valid
9	.731**	0.306	Valid
10	.621**	0.306	Valid
11	.743**	0.306	Valid
12	.882**	0.306	Valid
13	.814**	0.306	Valid
14	.838**	0.306	Valid
15	.831**	0.306	Valid

Table 4. Reliability of Evaluation Questionnaire

Item	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Rtable	Status
1	.803	0.306	Reliable
2	.924	0.306	Reliable
3	.928	0.306	Reliable
4	.841	0.306	Reliable
5	.930	0.306	Reliable
6	.790	0.306	Reliable
7	.924	0.306	Reliable
8	.931	0.306	Reliable
9	.926	0.306	Reliable
10	.930	0.306	Reliable
11	.926	0.306	Reliable
12	.919	0.306	Reliable
13	.922	0.306	Reliable
14	.921	0.306	Reliable
15	.922	0.306	Reliable

3. Findings and Discussion

This chapter reports the results of the questionnaire about students' IIE course based on the OBE framework. As seen in table 2, most students agree that the course has met their expectations as the lessons are relevant to their needs as future English teachers ($M=3,25$). Furthermore, the students also agree that the course provides learning activities that are clear, useful, relevant, appropriate, and support interaction and collaboration ($M=3,12$). Additionally, students acknowledged that the course material is useful and practical for their future career ($M=3,19$). Most of them also agreed that the tutor is engaging and providing helpful feedback ($M=3,20$). Although students shared positive evaluation in the aspects of course expectation, learning activities, course materials and tutor performance, most students still encountered challenges in the course as they confessed that the course materials are too difficult ($M=3,15$). Nevertheless, students still put effort into learning the IIE course.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions Toward Introduction to Inclusive Education Course

	Aspect A	Aspect B	Aspect C	Aspect D	Aspect E
Valid	129	129	129	129	129
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.256	3.124	3.198	3.202	3.155
Std. Deviation	0.416	0.303	0.444	0.398	0.394
Minimum	2.333	2.500	2.000	2.500	2.000
Maximum	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000

Integrating an inclusive education framework in the trend of English Language Teaching is a promising step to ensure the accessibility of English language learning for all. Unfortunately, the English teacher education program has not well structurally and nationally put it into the mainstream agenda although the urgency of this issue is increasing. The IIE course offered by SP-ELE is aimed at inducing students with the initial competence of the inclusive teaching practices that covers the topic of inclusive education principles, adaptive curriculum, differentiated instructions, universal

design learning and accessible digital learning. Although it is an elective course, most students were eager to take this course as 86% of students in batch 2020 participated in the course in this year. It reflects that most students think that this course is needed to complement their competencies in teaching English.

3.1. Course Expectations

The students expressed their agreement that learning with OBE principles in IIE course has the potential to fulfil their aspirations as future educators. Thus, the findings of this research support the principles of OBE, as argued by Wijaya (2020) who highlights the significant impact of OBE on students' learning motivation when teachers are able to create learning that is appropriate for them. Therefore, it is important to clarify the objectives of the course so that the material and activities in the course suit students' future needs. Apart from that, the topics presented in this IIE course are also relevant. Saha (2019) argues that OBE can help create appropriate outcomes for students through designing a curriculum that is effective and relevant for students.

3.2. Course Activities

This research reports that the course has fulfilled the course delivery in terms of course material and course activities, which practically supports the implementation of the OBE framework because it reflects the success of OBE implementation (Yuzni et al, 2021), which implements the OBE strategy. Activities in the course can also be delivered well according to the content, instructions and time that has been planned. Supported by the opinion of Xiao et al (2023), who say that in the OBE concept, lecture activities must be explained clearly, be useful, and focus on the quality and abilities of students in a comprehensive manner. That way students can benefit from IIE course. Plus, the time and sequence of activities in this IIE course are appropriate. In accordance with Sun (2020), supporting learning activities based on the OBE concept must focus on learning building for students. Not only that, the OBE concept supports students to deepen their results through experience, collaboration and exploration. According to Xerri et al (2018), students' involvement in academic activities is very important for the effectiveness and goals of their learning. In this way, it means that teachers are not only given the OBE syllabus but also carry out teaching and learning activities based on OBE principles to achieve the desired results.

3.3. Benefits of Course Materials

Education professionals have an important responsibility to implement inclusion. Therefore, teacher awareness of inclusion is needed to find solutions to challenges and difficulties during the learning process (Damayanti et al., 2022). Based on the results from the student's perspective, it is stated that the learning material presented in the IIE course is in accordance with the learning objectives and is relevant to real life situations. In accordance with Frick (2020) stated that the content of learning materials must support the development of students' rationality, guiding students to make strong connections based on real world experiences.

The activities in this course also provide an overview of how students can implement this course in their future work. Supported by the opinion according to Yip-Hoi (2020), the activities in the course are important for workplace skills. So that through this course students can overcome the challenges that exist when teaching. Therefore, students in this IIE course are provided with material that will support their skills in inclusive teaching. Thus, prospective students who take this course will feel the benefits of the IIE course which is implemented using OBE principles. Furthermore, SP-ELE students who will later become educators through this course will be more aware of the importance of inclusive education.

3.4. Tutor Performance

Not only material and activities, the presence of teachers or lecturers is also very important in their capacity as facilitators, encouraging students to gain knowledge that is useful for their personal and professional endeavors in the future. The research results of Armis and Mauliza (2022) found that apart from directing various learning materials according to the curriculum, teachers also motivated learning objectives. This means teachers in IIE course provided support to students so that they can achieve competency in inclusive education. This research also showed a positive response from tutors in terms of interesting facilitation. Tutors in IIE course provided useful input to support OBE implementation. In this way, as Muste (2020) stated that feedback can improve learning through

aligning efforts and activities with expected outcomes. Thus, tutors in IIE course provide feedback to help students improve their skills during the learning process.

3.5. Course Material Difficulties

It is true, the two elements related to the usefulness of the course and examples of its practical application show a clear relationship between course activities, evaluation, and learning outcomes, even though students find it difficult to master all the course material. According to Damit et al (2021), students' learning difficulties remain even though courses implement OBE. This happens to IIE course students, namely they have difficulty understanding the material. The challenges that usually arise when students learn about inclusiveness are due to their lack of understanding regarding the meaning of inclusiveness itself. Based on Spandagou (2020) states that inclusiveness is difficult to understand because the terms are complex. Even though they experienced difficulties, they did not just leave it. They actually try hard to understand the material. The benefits of students' hard work when studying is supported by research by Saidah et al (2019) which states that the efforts made by students in studying will help them achieve the desired competencies. Even though studying hard has an important role in implementing OBE and can help improve students' abilities and skills, evaluation is still needed to improve the quality of material in IIE courses so that students understand it more easily.

The OBE framework as a reference in designing IIE courses has helped SP-ELE achieve effective pedagogical practices because this research showed that the majority of students agree that this course has met their expectations in terms of course learning outcomes, course activities, and learning outcomes the course. This course is also beneficial for their future careers, and the performance of lecturers, this shows that the IIE design has guaranteed the voice of students and the profile of graduates. Thus, this research is supported by other research which also showed that the OBE framework applied to courses can be achieved pedagogically effective (Chan et al, 2022; Vidyakala, 2019; Sathya & Narayanan, 2021). However, despite successful alignment of the course curriculum with the program's graduate profile and student voice, the course needed to evaluate the material because students found it too difficult.

The OBE-based learning outcomes of the *Introduction to Inclusive Education* course has ensured the equivalence of the competencies needed by the EFL prospective teachers to manage inclusive classrooms. As this research result show the students' agreement toward the suitability of the course materials toward their future career is positives, the inclusive teaching competence should be shaped based on the following knowledge and skills comprising the awareness of disability, special needs students' identification and assessment, differentiated instructions, universal design learning, and knowledge on the regulation about inclusive education. The provision of courses on inclusive education in teacher education program all across disciplines is highly suggested, despite it is obligatory based on the regulation of number 13 of 2020 about reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities, courses on inclusive education provide initial training for prospective teachers to be knowledgeable and skillful in managing inclusive classroom. Broad of researches stipulated that inclusive teaching training is one of the attributing factors that affect the high efficacy and shape positive attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classroom (Forlin et al., 2009, 2011; Sharma, 2018; Sharma & George, 2016). Thus, the embedded course on inclusive education in all education study program should be encouraged.

Eventually, the integration of the OBE framework in IIE course design can make a significant contribution to the development of inclusive pedagogical practices in SP-ELE. This course ensures that students can develop a set of skills and prepares them for various educational and professional paths, especially for competencies in inclusive education. The material and activities presented in this course provided an overview of real work practices when they teach at school in the future. The role of lecturers in this course also has an active role in providing feedback that supports their achievements. However, it is also necessary for students to improve themselves. Ni-Bhroin & King (2020) state students need to develop various skills to be successful in general and specific environments. The findings of this research also highlight the need for continuous improvement and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of students and the teaching profession.

4. Conclusion

Inclusive teaching skills and competencies are very important for future teachers, not only because of the enforcement of policies regarding the implementation of inclusive education, but also to meet the learning needs that can be accessed by students with various needs as is the fact of the participation of students with special needs in public schools increasing throughout the year. Therefore, the successful implementation of the Introduction to Inclusive Education Course ensures the readiness of future EFL teachers to accommodate the diverse characteristics of students' needs. This is proven by research results showed that students agree that the learning outcomes, activities and tutor performance are in line with their expectations, they also agree that this course provides benefits for their future careers as teachers. However, they also agreed that they felt challenged and tried hard to understand the material presented because inclusiveness is complex material. This suggests that course designers need to readjust and modify materials to make them more concise, accessible, and simple to increase students' confidence in embracing competence in teaching English with an inclusive approach. In addition, this research suggests theoretical and practical recommendations to improve inclusive EFL teaching practices. Theoretically, this research can contribute constructive ideas about inclusive teaching strategies by presenting materials and incorporating flexible learning environments to increase engagement and accessibility for students with diverse needs. Practically, this research encourages institutions to increase educational equity and accessibility by equipping prospective teachers with inclusive teaching practices in the teacher education curriculum.

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