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THE PILOT IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A REVIEW

A Thesis Presented in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
at
Massey University

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education was introduced into the Malaysian school system as a pilot scheme in 1994, involving a small number of elementary schools throughout the country. This study examines teachers' and principals' conceptions of inclusive education, their understanding of the Inclusive Education Policy and their attitudes towards the pilot implementation of inclusive education. Using individual interviews and surveys, the researcher explored the views of regular and special education teachers from pilot and non-pilot elementary schools. A total of 36 special and regular classroom teachers and six principals from six geographically representative pilot schools and 18 traditional classroom teachers from six matching non-pilot schools participated in this study.

Data examination showed that differences existed in the teachers' conceptions of inclusive education. Seven hierarchically ordered conceptions of inclusive education were identified. They ranged from the provision of educational opportunities in the traditional classroom for all students regardless of disability to the provision of enrichment for students with special abilities.

Teachers were found to have limited understanding of the educational policies related to inclusive education. Many principals and teachers, nevertheless, favoured inclusive education but the teachers were concerned about an increase in workload as a result of the inclusion of children with special needs in their classes. Class size was also seen as a barrier to implementing inclusive education.

It was concluded that principals and teachers were concerned about the inadequate professional preparation of teachers for inclusive education and the difficulties of coping with children with special needs when placed in the traditional classroom settings. These findings have serious educational implications and support the need for comprehensive inservice training programmes that are designed to meet the needs of teachers during pre-service programmes and in in-service training. The researcher also gave some attention to the process of change as it occurred during the pilot
implementation of inclusive education while her discussion of theoretical issues, related to the implementation, led to the development of an explanatory model to assist understanding of an approach to the further implementation of inclusive education in Malaysia.
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MINOR EMENDATIONS TO THE THESIS

The Literature Review as the Study’s Basis. This review provided a foundation for the study and was important in determining the aims for the study that also contributes to the wider available literature.

Selection of Principals. One pilot school and its principal were selected from each of the six states shown in Table 3.2. Each non-pilot school and its principal was a neighbour of the pilot school.

Review of Transcripts. Transcripts were not returned to principals due to the constraints of time while the transcriptions produced no answers that lacked clarity.

A Comment on Sampling in the Study. Six schools from Malaysia’s distinctly different regions were selected for the study in order to provide a national flavour to the study. Of course, further studies might well include larger numbers of schools and principals.

Selected Quotes Presented in Two Languages. The quotes are presented in the Malay language as this was the original form of data collection. The quotes are presented in English which is the medium of this thesis. However, Malay readers will be able to read the quotes in their original form.

A Note on Triangulation in the Study. This was largely confined to seeking the differing perceptions of participants towards the pilot implementation of inclusive education and, as ideas were generated during data analysis, to remain faithful to the data; hence, the grounding “in the data” as ideas were developed. The collection of data from principals and teachers, in both pilot and non-pilot schools, provided the differing perceptions that provided their possibly differing perceptions on similar questions.

Terminology. The writer recognises that the use of raw numbers or percentages, when reporting the data in places (instead of, eg, “some” or “many”) would strengthen the presentation.

Addition to Bibliography.


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