

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ACCORDING TO GENDER, NATIONALITY AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE AT THREE SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to find out about the attitude of teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok. The objectives of this research are (a) To identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to gender, nationality and teaching experience at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand (b) To compare the significant difference of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand. The study was conducted using a survey at three schools in Bangkok. The researcher studied teachers attitude towards the topic at hand under five subscales, teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; classroom management; impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities; and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities, according to demographics. Analysis of the data showed that the teachers attitude towards the five subscales, were positive with the highest positive attitude towards impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities and the lowest positive attitude towards and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities. The analysis of the t-test showed the p value to be more than 0.05 for the effects of gender and teaching experience, which led to the conclusion of no significant difference in the teachers' attitude towards the five subscales according to gender and teaching experience. The analysis of from the t-test that compared the nationality's influence on teachers' attitude towards IE program, showed a p value of less than 0.05 for the attitude towards teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE and classroom behaviour of students with disabilities, which led to the conclusion of a significant difference in the teachers' attitude towards the 1st and 2nd variable with teachers of Asian descent had a more positive attitude towards the understanding of general philosophy of IE and while the results showed that teachers of non- Asian descent had a more favourable attitude towards classroom behaviour of students with disabilities. The P value of the t test of the other variables mentioned above was more

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than 0.05 which led to a conclusion of no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards the variables according to teaching experience. Further research can be done on the influence of nationality on the teachers' attitude towards the IE program.

Keywords: Inclusion, Special Educational Needs, Attitude, Mainstream Classroom.

Introduction

Teachers' attitudes towards teaching is very important for the education of children, therefore teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities is very important for the successful education of students in such environment. There is a need for teachers who are qualified to teach children with disabilities and a curriculum to support such an education more than ever in Thailand. Thai law mandates that students complete 12 years of free education with 9 years of compulsory education (National Education Act, 1999), with this law, more and more children are being enrolled in mainstream educational system; some of these children have some type of learning disability or handicap ranging from mild to severe (Office of Education Council, 2004). In the past the education of children with disabilities in Thailand were carried out by different organizations, which were mostly non-profit (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Bangkok, 2004). The treatments and education of children with disabilities were limited to the health department such as hospital and clinics (Chrontawonpanit, 2002), they were not introduced into schools or any other mainstream areas. In the year 1999, the Thai government passed the National Education Act, calling it the year of educating people with disabilities (Asia- Pacific Development Center on Disability, 2003). According to the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability, the National Education Act mandated the education of all children with special needs, with a goal of allowing all children to benefit from equal opportunity of education. The concept of inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream classroom is fairly new in Thailand; it needs a lot of hard work and commitment from all the people involved in the school to make the inclusion program a success. There are people who support the inclusion classroom setting and there are some who don't, the remaining populations are confused about the concept of an inclusion program (Cipkin & Rizza, 2011). When a teacher has limited knowledge of the concept of inclusion, it can affect the quality of education obtained by children (Cipkin & Rizza, 2011). The attitude of the teachers towards the inclusion program can affect the success of educating children with disabilities (Kauffmann, Hallahan & Ford, 1998).

The research was conducted at Rasami British International School, Trinity International School and Prasarnmit Primary International Programme. The researcher surveyed all the current teachers to study their attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics. The attitudes of the teachers were surveyed to understand them believes and understanding of IE under 5 subscales, teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; classroom management; impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities. The teachers' attitudes