



Global Conference on Business & Social Science-2014, GCBSS-2014, 15th&16th December,
Kuala Lumpur

Inclusive Education for Social Transformation

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Abstract

Segregation has happened in all societies, throughout centuries, for multiple reasons. What is clearly visible in our society presently is the segregation of disabled people. The disabled person on the other hand needs training to merge him/her into society. Social transformation could take place through inclusive education. Inclusive education requires well equipped, knowledgeable and competent teachers who are able to foster the required values, confidence and support in disabled students, thus preparing them to become capable citizens. This paper discusses the research background, the proposed teacher training program for regular teachers and the methodology used in this study.

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Peer-review under responsibility of GLTR International Sdn. Berhad.

Keywords: Biological; disability; human rights; inclusion; modules; neurological; program; society.

1. Introduction

Multiple intelligences and diversity are characteristics of the human race. The idea that a person with a disability is “useless” has been imbibed within the fabric of human societies. Therefore the concept of accepting disabled persons within the society and treating them as normal is considered *absurd*. “The segregation starts within the family and relations who are not able to accept a child with impairment” (Puri & Abraham, 2004). An infant born disabled is not cherished by his/ her own parents, family and then school and society. This negative mental attitude needs transformation. It is crucial that the present society views the disabled person as *normal* and not as *abnormal*. This

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culture should take place in the school world of the SEN (special educational needs) students. It is stated widely by professionals and scholars that the ultimate value of research is *how it transforms society*. Therefore it is hoped that this study that aims to enhance regular teachers' ability to handle diversity will support social transformation by generating a change in society's present techniques of thinking.

1.1 Laws and Reforms

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)” and “Education for All(2008)” aim to meet the needs of all children, youths and adults and stress that education is a fundamental human right. In the field of ‘Education for All’, a disabled student cannot be denied admission into a regular school. These rights are mentioned in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1994). In the education law of Malaysia, Tie(2011) states that “No person shall be denied the right to education”.

1.2 Concepts from Theories

As disability is a social problem and inclusive education involves the preparation of students to become members of society, this study has used concepts from theories concerning, *human development* as those stated by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Vygotsky (1978); *social learning and social development*, Bandura and McClelland(1977) and Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, and West(2011), *Aspects of ecology, changes in thinking*, Ainscow (2004) and *teacher competences*, Watkins (2000). Teachers of SEN students crucially need to understand the influences of society and ecology on an individual.

1.3 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a global movement in the world of education. The introduction of inclusive education brings with it a shift in the paradigm of thinking within the education system and the social world. “Inclusion is about the establishment and maintenance of a social world in which all people experience the realities of inclusive values and relationships. Inclusion is about enhancing social values and practices that influence the ecological aspects of human beings to support recognition of human rights” (Barton, 1977). Teachers need to comprehend that inclusion is about diversity and change in attitudes and instructional methods of teaching. Inclusion is a process that involves a *change* in the thinking patterns of educators, majority of whom are influenced by the “medical model” which seeks to highlight the deficits of the disabled individual. Rayner (2007) describes this medical model “as a ‘deficit model’ and presumes that pathology or the disorder itself is the basis for defining disability or learning difficulty.” As such, SEN students were segregated and taught in special classrooms. They were excluded from the regular classes and seen only as people who were different and needed help. The social model of disability highlights the struggle of disabled individuals to attain human rights. Inclusive education supports the social model and is meant to promote inclusiveness in all aspects of human life.

1.4 Teacher effectiveness

Research shows that there is a gap in this area of teacher effectiveness. The EFA (Education for all) (Jomtien, 2008) global monitoring report states, “It is surprising how few studies there are on teacher effects.....teacher effect is much higher than other factors.” A research journal points out that “more research is needed in teacher preparation....to date little information is available on effective teacher education models for inclusive classrooms.” The dynamic reform movement of Inclusive Education has been implemented in a number of secondary schools in Malaysia as is the trend globally. These inclusive schools have to provide education for an increasingly diverse group of students. It was stated in his speech by Youssoouf (2008, p. 4),p.4, the Malaysian representative at UNICEF that, “Inclusive Education is a challenge due to ... shortage of properly trained teachers and curriculums that are not adapted to the needs of children with disabilities”.

Within the Malaysian context, studies to investigate and to scrutinize the competency of regular teachers for effective teaching techniques for all students in the actual inclusive classrooms in secondary schools are minimal,

because full concentration in most schools is placed on *special education* while *inclusive education* is not prioritized. This can be perceived in the negligible number of SEN students enrolled in inclusive classes in most Malaysian secondary schools where inclusion has been initiated. Regular teachers who teach SEN students in inclusive settings urgently need a teacher training program to handle diversity.

Administrators and teachers in Malaysian inclusive secondary schools critically need to possess a *clear* understanding of the disabilities which cause learning disorders and what inclusive education is all about including its significance within the education system and its role in society. Regular teachers tend to view problems of learning as within the SEN students and not in the methods teachers employ in teaching diverse students. The general educator's concentration is more to cater for the disability and not to the ability of the SEN student. The implementation of the inclusive program can be effective only with a proper teacher training program which embraces the philosophy of inclusion and an understanding of neurological and biological factors affecting cognitive development in SEN students. This must be made the priority of the National Teacher Education System in Malaysia. A good training for inclusive practices will bring success to inclusive education which in turn will lead to the modification of the thinking patterns of our society.

1.5 Increase in learning disabilities

Furthermore the disorder of learning disabilities is on the increase. In a paper presented at the second Malaysian Conference on Rehabilitation, Ching (2009) claim that in 2004 the number of children with learning difficulties was 57,483 and in 2009 it increased to 100,180. As such, more students with learning disabilities will be included in regular classes in future.

1.6 Social transformation

Social transformation can only transpire if disabled persons know how to merge themselves into society. The training for acquiring the art of blending into the social world should begin during the early part of the life of the disabled person and the most appropriate period would be during the schooldays.

2. Proposed teacher training programme (TTP)

Therefore a regular teacher training program could intensify the existing ability of regular teachers to handle diversity. Hence *this study* by full research, proposes a teacher training program to investigate the effects of the training upon the *competence* and *readiness* of regular teachers in the Malaysian inclusive secondary school classroom practices.

2.1 The Objectives of the Study.

1. To identify the level of teacher competence and readiness to teach diverse students in inclusive secondary school classrooms.
2. To improve the level of teacher competence and readiness in inclusive secondary school classrooms through the teacher training program TTP.
3. To identify if there are significant differences in teacher competence and readiness between the experimental group and the control group.

2.2 The Teacher Training Programme

The proposed teacher training program focuses on enhancing regular teachers' *competence and readiness* in significant areas in teaching and learning in a diverse classroom. For competence, the areas are: knowledge, skill, practice and values. For readiness the areas, such as acceptance, confidence, tolerance and commitment are enhanced, in order to instruct a class of diverse students in the Malaysian secondary school inclusive classroom.

The program is infused with *two* significant elements which are, *disability awareness* and *inclusive education awareness*. The dimensions of neurological and biological factors and inclusive educational factors include essential

elements of disability awareness such as the various brain parts affected in learning disabilities, and inclusive educational awareness such as its philosophy, which will impact and implicate the training program. As the training program is infused with disability awareness which emphasizes the essential brain areas that process speech and language, and inclusive education awareness which explains the philosophy of inclusion and its benefits. The training program will result in improved classroom practices in inclusive settings, culminating in social transformation.

The impact of this training program will be upon the regular teachers. The input of knowledge disseminated during the training program will equip the educators with an understanding of the biological factors that give rise to neurological disorders which, the disabled students are struggling with, such as specific learning and pragmatic language disabilities. This training program will erase the negative thinking pattern of the teachers and later, society.

The training program includes *training modules* to be used in the intervention. These modules should enhance regular teachers with competence and readiness to face and teach a class of diverse students and at the same time supporting and cultivating habits of respect for the disabled in the non- disabled students.

2.3 The Methodology

The Quasi experimental study utilizes the non-equivalent experimental design. The instrument is a questionnaire and is measured through the five point Likert scale. The ‘intervention’ will be administered in an inclusive secondary school. As the teacher training program investigates the effects of the *independent variable* which is the training program, on the *dependent variables* of competence and readiness, the Quasi experimental study is used. The non-equivalent control group design, uses a *pre-test and post-test*, Campbell, Stanley, and Gage(1963).The non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test will be used in this study because, “it is one of the most widespread designs in educational research” Campbell & Stanley (1963) and most importantly it is especially suitable for this study of cause and effect. The non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test is represented in the following table.

Table 1.Non-equivalent control group design

		Pre-test	Experiment	Post-test
Experimental Group	NR	01	x	02
Control Group	NR	01	-	02
Duration 10 weeks 1½hrs per week.				

In this design NR represents **non-randomization**, O1 represents pre-test, X represents the treatment implemented, and O2 represents the post-test. So while both the control and treatment group complete a pre-test and a post-test, the treatment group is the only group that receives the ‘experiment’.

2.4The Population

The population will be all regular teachers, teaching students in inclusive settings in secondary schools in Malaysia.

2.5 The Accessible Population.

The accessible population for the teacher training program involves regular teachers in the Malaysian inclusive secondary schools in Penang.

2.6The Sample

The sample for this study is from a population of regular teachers in two secondary schools in Penang where inclusive education has been introduced.

2.7 The Instrument

The instrument to be used for the pre-test and the post-test is in the form of a questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire will be measured in a 5 point Likert scale.

2.8 Pilot Testing and Findings.

The pilot testing of the instrument *was* done at two secondary schools in Penang. SPSS was used for the analysis. As the Cronbach's coefficient alpha extracted using SPSS in the analysis for both the dependent variables, is more than .70 the instrument is *reliable*. "Validity is the degree to which evidence from a test or other research method measures what it is supposed to measure." (Bernstein, Penner, Stewart, & Roy, 2012, p. 29). The validity of the instrument for this study was verified by an expert, and is found to be *valid*.

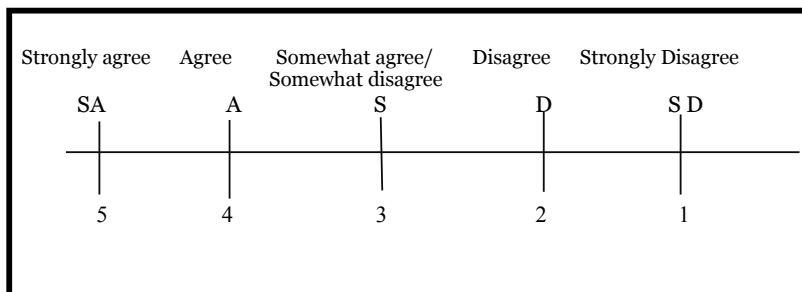


Fig.1. The five point Likert scale.

2.9 Modules for the Training

A total number of five modules have been prepared for the intervention which will be administered in an inclusive secondary school. These modules are packed with information about disability awareness and inclusive education awareness, activities and written tasks for reflective thinking. The duration of the intervention will be *ten* weeks.

3. Data Analysis

The researcher proposes to use the statistical technique of ONE WAY MANCOVA for data analysis to control covariates such as race, gender and age. The ONE refers to one independent variable. In this study there is only one independent variable which is the teacher *training program* (TTP). The two dependent variables are *competence* and *readiness* to teach and manage students with special educational needs. MANCOVA which stands for "multivariate analysis of covariance" (<http://www.statisticssolutions.com/>) was chosen for two reasons: The first reason is, the study measures two dependent variables. The second reason is, MANCOVA is appropriate for analysis involving related sets of 'before' and 'after' study data (AbdulRahim, 2009, p. 133).

3.1 Significance of the Training Program.

The implementation of the training program, will benefit all regular teachers and educators in inclusive Secondary Schools, as they will have enhanced information on methods of coping with diversity and the process of managing and educating SEN students together with their normal peers. This program will also benefit school administrators and officials in the education department to make adaptations to the school curriculum. It will also eliminate segregation and hopefully bridge the gap that exists between people with disabilities and those without disabilities in our society.

Effective lesson planning and instructional methods, efficacious teaching and learning in the inclusive classroom

will ultimately result in successful inclusive practices, that provide opportunities for the disabled students to have full interaction with their normal peers and this will ultimately support them to feel at ease in the real world.

4. Conclusion

Inclusion means celebrating differences. It introduces a culture where all people are equally valued and everyone feels accepted. Inclusion and participation are absolutely necessary for human dignity and the appreciation of human rights within a society. The investigation done through the teacher training program will bring about a change in the curriculum for teacher training as it needs to be redesigned and restructured to meet the demands of all teachers. Changes in attitudes of teachers, from negative ideas to positive ones will occur. Inclusive education demands more positive beliefs and greater commitment from the professionals. Teachers who value and respect their students, understand that students with disabilities if supported and given the opportunities, can achieve more than what is expected of them.

Most importantly regular teachers will appreciate differences and understand that they are the professionals who will be training disabled students who will ultimately become future citizens within the society. Inclusive education if conducted with the objective of training students to integrate into society, will be beneficial in transforming society in its thinking and bringing about a paradigm shift in society's beliefs and opinions. Society needs "to learn to live with differences and learn to learn from differences" as stated by Ainscow (2011).

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