The perceptions of Thai preschool teachers about inclusive education for young children with disabilities

S. Sukbunpant
The perceptions of Thai preschool teachers about inclusive education for young children with disabilities

Sasipin Sukbunpant

B.Ed. (Early Childhood)(Hons),
M.Ed. (Education Psychology), M. Spec. Ed. (Special Education)

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Faculty of Education and Arts
The University of Newcastle, Australia
February, 2013
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed: ..................................................
Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis was made possible by many individuals to whom I am greatly indebted.

Without the financial support of the Thai Government who provided me with a Strategic Scholarship for Frontier Research Network –Thailand’s Commission on Higher Education, I would not have been able to survive in my research journey.

I am very grateful to the Chiangmai Rajabhat University staff members for their willing assistance throughout my study program. Thank you Assist. Prof. Yeamluck Udakorn, Assist. Prof. Thammakit Thammo, Assist. Prof. Suchanart Sitanurak, Asso.Prof. Surin Yodkampong, Assist. Prof. Somkate Uttayotha, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katemanee Markmee, Assist. Prof. Santanee Kunachayangkul, and Aj. Prisin Pintana, Thank you to all staff at the Faculty of Education and the Special Education Centre, especially K. Thitinun Keawnil who was always gracious when I asked for support.

Deep gratitude is given to both of my supervisors, Associate Professor Michael Arthur-Kelly and Associate Professor Ian Dempsey. Their guidance, valuable comments and encouragement made this thesis possible. I would like to thank Professor Allyson Holbrook and Professor Max Smith for their guidance to my research practice.

This study was granted from the School of Education, University of Newcastle. I have been able to conduct six months of research field trips in Thailand. Thanks are given to Dr. Thomas Griffiths who was the head of the research support team at the School of Education. To Dr. Zsuzsanna Millei who widened my world in the area of early childhood study. Thank you very much.

I very much appreciated the assistance of the Thai educational expert- Aj. Suleekran Thijae, and preschool teachers. Thank you for participating in this study. They so willingly gave up their time to participate in this study and transferred their
experiences regarding inclusive educational practices. Their responses were meaningful and worthwhile.

Great thanks for all kinds of support to my friends. Suwadee Mongkol, Monthiwa Chaikew, Palanuch Kongka, Buntarika Jaikrajang, Chanick Wangpanich, Puritad Inya, Rungnaka Lerntcharapong, Thitaporn Thoopputra, Nonnuch Petchboonwat, Vipada Petchot, Dr. Chamimone Sirsurak. Special Thanks for Watinee Opartkiattikul who devoted her times to share, laugh and tears with me. Your friendship, encouragement, and support allowed me to complete this study.

I wholly appreciate remarkable encouragement and support from my Australian family, Julie and Robert Norris. Thank you for your unconditional support. I am proud to be your daughter. My thanks to my family members in Thailand, father, Sanan, sister Sasiwimon, brother, Thanathep. Special thanks to my mother Supanij Songat, who prays for our Lord Buddha every day to bless me with success in my study. I also do acknowledge my mother in law Payom Sukbunpant who has taken care of my son during my study.

Finally, thank you very much to my beloved husband, Sutthisak and lovely son, Om, for their patience and spritely support through my long research journey.
Table of Contents

Title Page ........................................................................................................................................ i
Declaration ....................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables ...................................................................................................................................... viii
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................................... x
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations ............................................................................................. xi
Abstract ............................................................................................................................................ xiii
Publications from this research ....................................................................................................... xv

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Background .......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 The importance of teachers’ perceptions ........................................................................ 4
  1.3 The inclusive education movement in Thailand .......................................................... 6
  1.4 Purpose of the study ....................................................................................................... 8
  1.5 Focus of the study .......................................................................................................... 8
  1.6 Definition of terms ........................................................................................................ 8
  1.7 The place of the researcher ........................................................................................ 9
  1.8 The importance of the study ...................................................................................... 10
  1.9 Organisation of the thesis ............................................................................................ 12

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................... 13
  2.1 Inclusion ......................................................................................................................... 13
    2.1.1 Definition of inclusion .......................................................................................... 13
    2.1.2 Rationale for inclusion ....................................................................................... 15
    2.1.3 Benefit of Inclusion ............................................................................................ 16
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 67
  3.1 Research design......................................................................................... 67
  3.2 Population and sample .............................................................................. 72
  3.3 Instruments.................................................................................................. 73
  3.4 Reliability and validity .............................................................................. 76
  3.5 Data collection ............................................................................................ 81
  3.6 Data analysis ............................................................................................... 88
  3.7 Summary of the chapter ........................................................................... 95

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS: QUESTIONNAIRE........................................ 97
  4.1 Chapter Overview ...................................................................................... 97
List of Tables

Table 4.1  Demographic characteristics of the respondents .......................................... 98
Table 4.2  Preschool teachers teaching experience
and special education training ................................................................. 99
Table 4.3  Frequency and grouping of children with identified disabilities
per classroom ............................................................................................. 100
Table 4.4  Preschool teachers’ training needs related to working
with young children with disabilities ....................................................... 103
Table 4.5  Preschool teachers’ training options ......................................................... 103
Table 4.6  Mean and standard deviation of teachers’ attitude and training
toward inclusive education for young children with disabilities ............... 105
Table 4.7  Mean and standard deviation of teachers’ perceptions about their
educational preparation regarding inclusive education
for young children with disabilities ............................................................ 107
Table 4.8  Mean and standard deviation of teachers’ perceptions
of the process of collaboration regarding
inclusive education for young children with disabilities............................ 108
Table 4.9  Factor analysis of section B (attitude) ........................................................ 111
Table 4.10 Factor analysis of section B (training) .......................................................... 112
Table 4.11 Factor analysis of section C (educational preparation) .............................. 113
Table 4.12 Factor analysis of section D (process of collaboration) ............................. 115
Table 4.13 Correlations between teachers’ training needs and teachers’ attitude ...... 118
Table 4.14 Correlation between teachers’ training needs
and their personal characteristics ............................................................ 119
Table 4.15 Correlation between teachers’ training needs and their schools and classroom characteristics ................................................................. 120

Table 4.16 Correlation between teachers’ training needs and type of children with a disability ................................................................. 122

Table 4.17 Means and Standard Deviation of the training topic need for teachers in four Thai provinces ................................................................. 124

Table 4.18 Differences amongst teachers’ training needs across four provinces .... 125

Table 4.19 Correlations between teachers’ characteristics and their attitude ........ 128

Table 4.20 Correlations between teacher attitude and their school and classroom characteristics ................................................................. 129

Table 4.21 Correlations between teachers’ attitude and type of disability .......... 130

Table 4.22 Report of differences in teachers’ attitudes across the provinces ....... 131

Table 4.23 The ordinal scale variable before and after collapsing into two categories ................................................................. 133

Table 4.24 Relationship between each variable and teachers’ attitude ............. 134

Table 4.25 Results of standard multiple regression analysis for factors predicting teachers’ attitudes to inclusive education for young children with disabilities ................................................................. 137

Table 5.1 Demographic data for the participants ......................................................... 142
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Education placement options for Thai children with disabilities .................... 48
Figure 2.2 The ecological systems theoretical framework ............................................... 59
Figure 3.1 The sequential explanatory design: Follow up Explanations Model.............. 70
Figure 3.2 Coding process in qualitative research ............................................................ 92
Figure 3.3 Developed Themes .......................................................................................... 94
Figure 4.1 Proportion of types of disability

by number of children with a disability in the class............................................... 101
### List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualised Educational Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSP</td>
<td>Individual Family Service Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRE</td>
<td>Least Restrictive Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Children with Visual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>Children with Hearing Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Children with Intellectual Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHY/HI</td>
<td>Children with Physical disabilities/Health impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD</td>
<td>Children with Learning Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Children with Speech and Language Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BED</td>
<td>Children with Behavioural Emotional and Social disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>Children with Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Children with Multiple Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPA</td>
<td>A teacher who had the Least Positive Attitude toward inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPA</td>
<td>A teacher who had the Most Positive Attitude to inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>Principle Components Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>Number of sub-sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>Total number of cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2)</td>
<td>Chi-square test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df)</td>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p)</td>
<td>The Probability of obtaining a test statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r)</td>
<td>Pearson’s correlation coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r_s)</td>
<td>Spearman’s correlation coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Effect Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Sum of Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Mean squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>A value resulting from a standard statistical test used in ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Significance level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Unstandardised regression coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Standardised regression coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>Coefficient of determination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The present study aims to (a) examine the needs of Thai preschool teachers in relation to the inclusion of young children with a disability (b) investigate whether there are relationships between teachers’ demographic characteristics and their attitudes and their needs, and (c) identify the predictors of Thai preschool teachers’ attitude regarding inclusive education for young children with a disability.

This study was conducted in the upper north educational region in Thailand which consists of four provinces; Chiangmai, Chiangrai, Lampang and Lamphun. The population of the current study was 1,638 public primary schools which have preschool classes and there were 350 schools in the sample. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in this study. All 589 of the preschool teachers in the sample school were purposively selected to complete the questionnaire: *The Thai Preschool Teachers’ Perceptions on Inclusive Education Rating Scale*. In this study, 535 from a total of 589 preschool teachers returned the questionnaire. The response rate was 90.83%. There were 528 completed questionnaires for further analysis. In the second phase of this study, 20 preschool teachers who had the top 10 and bottom 10 scores from section B of the questionnaire ranked in order from the high score to low score were selected and invited to be interviewed to get a deeper understanding of teachers’ perceptions.

A four-point Likert scale of items in the questionnaire indicated Thai preschool teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion for young children with disabilities were slightly positive. The interview results indicated the Thai preschool teachers have shown their preference for a child with mild disability rather than a child with severe disability disabilities. This study has underlined the role of cultural and religious factors along with teachers’ explanations about the cause of disability and the reason for working
with children with disabilities. Thai preschool teachers expressed their need for training regarding teaching children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. This study also found that there were some significant positive and negative relationships between the teacher’s needs, teachers’ attitude and their personal characteristics. The finding of this study indicate that educational preparation, collaboration and teaching experience with children with disabilities are the predictors of Thai preschool teachers’ attitude toward inclusive education for young children with disabilities.

Recommendations are made for changes in practice and for future research. Inclusive education policy should be promoted at preschool level. Effective follow up strategies from the government agency are necessary to ensure successful implementation of this inclusive education policy. Providing quality in-service training for teachers should be based on teachers’ suggestions. It is hoped that the present study can contribute to a systematic plan in implementing inclusion in the Thai educational system and thus improve the teaching and training for Thai preschool teachers as well as positive educational outcomes for young Thai children with disabilities.
Publication from this research

Referred Publication:


Conference/seminar Presentations:

