

Introduction

Among students with special needs in Taiwan, students with visual impairments were the earliest to start mainstreaming — beginning in 1967 when Taiwan started promoting mainstreaming for students with visual impairments under the sponsorship of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In the late 1990s, as an echo to the worldwide movement of inclusion and because of the conviction of inclusive ideas, special education in Taiwan began moving toward a goal of inclusion, though not necessarily full inclusion (Wu, 2007).

The Ministry of Education in Taiwan has investigated the population for age 6-15 students with disabilities from July 1990 to July 1991. The investigation exposed that the students with special needs occupied 2.121% in population of 75,562. Moreover, 15.44% students with special needs received education in self-contained classes, resource rooms, and special education schools, while 84.44% students with special needs received education with peers in the neighborhood schools. This investigation indicated that a great number of students with special needs learned and developed interpersonal relationship with peers with non-disabilities in the inclusion.

This study attempts to examine the effects of inclusion at the two schools from the perspective of the participants with two research questions: (1) what obstacles and supports exist when including students with visual impairments in the inclusion setting? and (2) what is the proper role for the principals in promoting inclusion?

Falvey, Scheyer, Coots, & Bishop (1995) illustrate inclusion as students with special needs learning and joining activities with students with non-disabilities for a portion time in the school day in school settings. The goals of Regular Education Initiative are: (1) integrating general education and special education into one a system; (2) accepting more students with disabilities in the non-segregated educational settings; (3) ameliorating the academic performance of students with mild or moderate disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Principals should target the implication of policy in three areas: (1) recruiting new faculty members and encouraging them to receive certificates in the inclusion; (2) examining and retaining high quality training and performance; (3) making decision with the collaborative effort of faculty members (Fallon, 2004).

In order to have comprehensive reform for inclusion, principals need to play vital roles in making different policies in terms of curriculum modification, resource location, and professional development for teachers (Sage, 1996). Leaders should model collaboration and expect others to demonstrate equity and parity when engaging in the collaborative teaming process (Thousand & Villa, 1992). Leaders should encourage creative thinking and problem solving in terms of organizational structures (Sage, 1996). Additionally, the principals need to provide support for teachers in terms of time, resources, and creative use of school personnel (Rodriguez & Tompkins, 1994). Leaders should intentionally hire teachers who support inclusion of students with special needs in general classroom settings (Morgan & Demchak, 1996).

Methods

Design

The study used qualitative research as a methodology, since it supported the study examined the research queries related to the inclusion. Qualitative methodology, on the contrary to the quantitative research, is capable of this study to construct a personal relationship with the study participants while seeking respond to the research questions. The study actively participated in the sites where the researcher conducted this study and observed what the study participants were doing in their working environments. After the study joined in the working environment of the study participants and interviewed participants of the study, qualitative research enabled to realize the reasons why they have specific behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, qualitative methodology caught complicated details of phenomena that were difficult to convey with quantitative methods. Through interviews and documentation strategies of qualitative research, the study came to an understanding of the attitudes and beliefs behind implementations of inclusion at junior high schools from the perspectives of special education and general education teachers.

Sample Selection

This part discussed selection of sites and participants for this study.