Programme: Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr. in Special and Inclusive Education
Module: Dissertation
Parents’ Voice: Concerns, barriers and benefits of Parental Involvement for children with Autism in Malaysia
Module code: ERM030L003S
Student Name: Gayathri Devi R Muralidharan
Student Number:

1st Marker’s name: PhDr. Pavlína Šumníková, PhD.

Title of dissertation:
Parents’ Voice: Concerns, barriers and benefits of Parental Involvement for children with Autism in Malaysia

Use (i.e. exploration and discussion) of literature/evidence:
Gayathri Devi uses the literature to build an argument and advance the field. Gayathri Devi works with definition of parental involvement and universal design on involvement of parents and teachers; advantages and disadvantages parents with a child diagnosed with autism, studying at the primary level either in a government or private school in Kuala Lumpur (the capital city) or Selangor (main state) in Malaysia; with the theoretical view on education in Malaysia; with the meaning of learning difficulties - Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), students with special needs in Malaysia; special and Inclusive Education in Malaysia.

Gayathri Devi analyses Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development Theory and the role of parent-teacher communication in child’s education.

Gayathri Devi synthesizes the literature and integrates literature from other fields, she understands of relevant literature and key concepts.

In the conclusion, she provides adequate coverage of the literature.

Design of project– research question or hypothesis, and methodology, Data analysis and Presentation:

Research questions:

a) How do parents perceive parental involvement in their child’s education at home and in school?
b) What are the types of involvement of Malaysian parents in their child’s education?

c) What are the concerns and barriers hindering parental involvement in their child’s education?

d) Is there a difference in the level of parental involvement between government and private primary schools in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Selangor?

**Methodology**

- a qualitative design

Gayathri Devi gathered information by conducting an interview using an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire based on Epstein’s six stages of parental involvement model. The interview sessions were audio recorded for the purpose of transcribing and data analysis. The data was thematically analyzed, coded and categorized into themes (eight parents comprising six mothers and two fathers).

**Structure, communication, and presentation:**

Gayathri Devi places the problem in context, she flows from question and theory. Very good structured work.

Gayathri Devi worked independently and with me as a supervisor she communicated very well.

**Overall comments (including any areas for further improvement):**

- The work “Parents' Voice: Concerns, barriers and benefits of Parental Involvement for children with Autism in Malaysia” of Gayathri Devi is structured logically and written comprehensively, it is illustrated professionally with a clear outline. The interviewee - parents recognize the importance of collaboration and sense of shared responsibility for education of their children, information with regard to the barriers hindering successful parental involvement in Malaysia etc. (p. 64).

- Gayathri Devi, I liked to read your work - this dissertation and I liked to communicate with you. You write very brilliant. You work with literature very sensitively, deeply and you compare researches with your research perceptive.

**My questions are:**

- You have worked with Malaysian parents; you have studied Czech school system. What did you surprise you in compare with researches (Strnadova, I.; Hajkova, V., 2011, etc.) positively? And negatively? How way do you see for future researches?
The submitted thesis deals with a very pressing topic, not only as relates to inclusive education for children with specific education needs, i.e. autism spectrum disorder. Parents have significant involvement in the care for and education of children especially in the home from an early age all the way through to school entry. Once they have started school the primary role in education is taken over by teachers and parents primarily act as volunteers or sponsors of schools and their activities. Involvement of parents in the care for and education of pupils in schools is, however, a necessary prerequisite for the further successful development of the children.

The author aimed the research at ascertaining the extent to which parents of children with autism in Malaysia are able to influence the education of their children within the framework of schools, state and private, and to actively participate. The author chose to tackle the research topic using a qualitative survey, specifically through interpretive phenomenological analysis, which enables the researcher to analyze in detail the subjective experiences of the research respondents. The author prepared the research survey based on findings from academic literature. The data for the research was obtained through open questions by means of a semi-structured interview. The choice of research methods is clearly explained by the author and she mentions both their advantages and limitations.

The research respondents comprised eight parents (six women and two men) of children with autism aged between 6 and 12 years. The author describes in detail the selection method of the research participants, the research survey process (including the pilot study) and the method of analysis and categorization of the obtained data.

Although the sample of respondents was not extensive, I believe the author was able to collect sufficient data and to present, in a comprehensive manner, all relevant aspects relating to the extent, opportunity and restrictions pertaining to the involvement of parents of children with autism in the education of their children in schools. The research described the situation in Malaysia, however I believe that the obtained data may advance improvements in teaching practices and establishing optimal education policies for children with autism not only in the researched country, but also in a broader context, can serve as inspiration in other countries.

AGREED MARK:
(All Grades are provisional and Subject to Confirmation by the Board of Examiners and by Senate)