An Analysis of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) degree programme of the Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague.

This dissertation is submitted in part-fulfilment of the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr Special Educational Needs

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DECLARATION

This dissertation has been developed independently by me, Daniel Sunkwa Quarcoo Dogbe, in part-fulfilment of the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr Special Educational Needs (SEN), 2009-2010 at

Roehampton University (London, United Kingdom)

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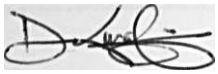
I hereby declare that the dissertation is entirely my own work and that all references have been properly acknowledged. I also declare that this dissertation has not been submitted previously for any higher degree.

Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative small-scale case study is on "An Analysis of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Degree Programme of the Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague". It was conducted between February and July 2010 to gain deep understanding into how teachers of learners with special needs are educated in the Czech Republic and to find out how the programme is promoting inclusive education in the country. The literature review on teacher education and special education needs underscored the importance of the topic in the new millennium as many governments and ministries through their faculties of education in universities are coming up with strategies to ensure the achievement of "education for all" by 2015. I administered semi-structured interview to 3 lecturers including a retired professor of the Department and an official from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; questionnaire to 15 final year students selected through purposive sampling and reviewed official legal documents to gather data for the study. I analysed the data thematically using triangulation method to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The results revealed that the programme comprises both theory and practicum components which are blended to produce competent graduate teachers. The findings also depicted the programme to be adequate and balanced. The data indicated that the theory aspect comprises over two-thirds and the practice teaching about one-third making some students have the impression that it is too theoretical. Another major finding from the study was that graduates after completing their university studies at the bachelor's, master's or doctoral level find work wherever they prefer because it is not a programme for only teachers but for all those interested in disability issues - teachers, social workers, administrators and those from the private sector. Finally, I concluded that the SEN programme like many other teacher education programmes worldwide as portrayed in the literature review is lopsided, comprehensive and adequate. Some suggestions have been provided for replication in future studies.

Key Words: Special Educational Needs (SEN), Inclusive Education, Teacher Education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Declaration ..... ü

Approval Sheet iii

Acknowledgements iv

Abstract v

Table of Contents vi

List of Tables viii

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study 1

1.2 Statement of the Problem 3

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study 5

1.4 Literature Review 5

a. Pre-service Teacher Education - Global Overview 6
b. Development of Special Educational Needs (SEN) 7
c. Teacher Education and Special Needs Education in the Czech Republic 8
d. Factors that promote Special Education Needs 9
e. Factors that inhibit the implementation of SEN 10

1.5 Methodology 10

1.6 Research Questions 11

1.7 Significance of the study 11

1.8 Ethical Considerations 11

1.9 Limitation of the study 12

1.10 Dissemination 12

1.11 Organization of the study 12

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction....14

2.2 Pre-service teacher education....14

2.3 Development of Special Educational Needs (SEN)....24

2.4 Special education teacher education....25

2.5 Teacher Education in the Czech Republic....27

2.6 Contemporary special education teacher education in Charles University....33

2.7 Factors that promote inclusive education in the Czech Republic....35

2.8 Factors inhibiting inclusive education in the Czech Republic....35

2.9 Summary of Literature review....36

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction....37

3.2 Research Design....37

3.3 Sample....38

3.4 Research instruments....39

3.5 Instrument administration and data collection....42

3.6 Reliability & Validity....44

3.7 Ethical considerations....46

3.8 Scoring and Analysis....46

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction....47

4.2 Main Results : Analysis of semi-structured interview data....47

4.3 Analysis of data from questionnaire....55

4.4 Content analysis....60

4.5 Summary....62

CHAPTER FIVE : DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction....64

5.2 Discussion and Evaluation on objectives of the SEN degree programme at Charles University....64

5.3 Discussion and Evaluation on the impact of the SEN degree programme on the Czech Community 68

5.4 Discussion and Evaluation on how the SEN degree programme is promoting inclusion in the Czech Republic 72

5.5 Summary 73

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction 74

6.2 Lecturers analysis of the SEN degree programme 75

6.3 Students' analysis of the SEN degree programme 76

6.4 Impact of SEN programme on Czech Community 76

6.5 Promotion of inclusion by the SEN degree programme in Czech Republic 77

6.6 Recommendations 78

References 80

TABLE

Table 1: Percentage of instruments sent out and retrieved 39

CHAPTER 1

Teacher Education is 'the bedrock of the education system '.

ETUCE, 1994.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Issues about special education needs(SEN) and or inclusive education are now taking centre stage in national and international agenda. Universally, there is a growing concern about access to quality basic education for all school age children with special reference to students with disabilities and other vulnerable learners. Considerable efforts have, therefore, been directed at enhancing the skills of teachers through pre-service teacher education for teacher educators to become more conversant with new standards and instructional strategies for the teaching of basic skills. In general, it is assumed that special education needs is an appendage of regular education and has been treated as such but this view has been refuted in many circles. According to Federico Mayor, former Director-General of UNESCO,

> 'Special needs education cannot advance in isolation. It must be part of an overall educational strategy and, indeed, of new social and economic policies. This requires a review of the policy and practice in every sub-sector within education from pre-school to university, to ensure that the curricula, activities and programmes are to the maximum extent possible, fully accessible to all' (UNESCO, 1994 The Salamanca Statement & Framework for Action on Special Needs Education).

The UNESCO Director's statement is subsumed in the World Declaration on Education for All and it is supported by Ainscow (1991) who pointed out that: "Education for all also means education for everyone" (p.6). The need to provide and raise standards of education for all learners is almost universally recognised. This wind of change has brought about educational reforms in many countries including the Czech Republic so that important educational lapses in the system may be improved. These reforms have influenced teacher education and the curriculum at all levels of education.

The reforms have called for a corresponding increase in the education of more qualified teachers to be able to respond to the demands of the changing times. Thus, many education reform initiatives have been tried over the years until 1989 when the special education needs law was enforced by parliament iwww.msmt.cz). Since then, there has been massive progress in the process due to the National Programme of Education Development. This legislative instrument known as the White Paper empowered the Ministry of Education to ensure that all citizens of the Czech Republic of school age including those with impairments were enrolled in school (www.msmt.czY

Consequently the nation's teacher education institutions responsible for the preparation of teachers for the country's basic and secondary schools set to work. This study is on one of the Departments in Charles University in Prague which is responsible for educating special education teachers. Charles University has many Faculties and Departments of learning including the Department of Special Education which educates students and other professionals for children with special education needs in various disability areas such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, mental handicap and intellectual disabilities, autism and behaviour problems. Some of the students from this Department

study hard to acquire in-depth knowledge of contemporary issues in special education needs as well as state-of-the-art techniques needed to teach and manage individuals with special educational needs. Charles University also makes every effort to provide all students , including those with disabilities with equal conditions and access to education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Special Education Needs degree programme of the Department of Special Education in Charles University has been on-going for some time now and many of the graduates after completing their programmes of study find employment in special schools in the country to teach while others work as itinerant teachers and special education co-ordinators to promote and implement the country's educational practices regarding special needs children. Notwithstanding the implementation of the special education teacher preparation programmes, some studies have confirmed that teachers and teacher education have much more to do. (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1990; Shaeffer, 1990; Brock, 1997). Public concern about falling standards in education, pupils' under-achievement in schools, teacher mediocrity, as well as teacher incompetence, especially in basic schools, call for critical analyses of teacher education programmes from time to time. (Heyneman, 1989; Lockheed and Verspoor, 1990; Shaeffer, 1990; Brock, 1997).

Special education needs in the Czech Republic is also being influenced by changes in general education and by international debates on inclusive education and other education reforms. It is therefore incumbent on the Department of Special Education which has the responsibility of educating some of the nation's teachers to fashion out comprehensive and responsive degree programmes to equip the students with knowledge and skills in

content and methodology to enable them to operate effectively in basic and secondary schools to promote the concept of inclusion nationwide.

The apparent changes in the teacher education systems all over the world call for the review of teacher education programmes to adequately solve basic education difficulties. It is generally believed that the success of most education reforms depends largely on the availability of competent and adequate teacher supply. These professionals have the onus to implement, sustain and direct the programmes to the desired goals.

The education of special education needs teachers cannot be an exemption. Even though special education teacher supply in this country may be quite substantial perhaps due to the existence of more institutions in other parts of the country, much still remains to be achieved in the area of inclusive education. This is especially so with regard to teacher competence and attitudes. In the Czech Republic as in other countries, it is possible that graduates of the programme might not be applying the skills required of them in the field. It is also possible that special curriculum considerations such as braille reading and writing, sign language interpretation and finger-spelling including other communication modes for the hearing impaired, behaviour modification strategies, techniques in orientation and mobility training have been taken for granted. It is, therefore, necessary to critically analyse the special education needs degree programme to be able to gain in-depth understanding and knowledge of it and to find out how it is promoting inclusive education in the Czech Republic.

The main issue for analysis is: What is the current status of special education needs degree of the Special Education Department at Charles University in Prague and how is it promoting inclusive education in the country? What seems to be the situation is the

presence of attitudinal prejudices towards individuals with special educational needs (SEN) and physical environmental barriers which may be hindering the effective implementation of the practice of the inclusion concept in the country (www.muni.cz). For, instance, Garner (2000) was very much concerned about "the conceptual and practical unpreparedness of many newly trained teachers who are expected to form the vanguard of inclusive initiatives in education" (p.l 11).

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the current special education needs degree programme of the Special Education Department at Charles University in Prague and to find out how it is promoting inclusive education in the Czech Republic.

1.4 Literature Review

Literature review is very vital to dissertations and other research studies. According to Boote & Beile (2005), 'a researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field' (p.3). The literature that has been reviewed covers the global overview of pre-service teacher education, development of special education needs, teacher education in the Czech Republic as well as special education in the Czech Republic, special education programme at Charles University, factors that promote or inhibit SEN in the Czech Republic and the summary of the literature. This section will be put in sub-headings as follows:

(a) Pre-service Teacher Education - Global Overview

Learning how to teach, and working to become a good and qualified teacher is a long-term process that requires not only the development of practical and complex skills under the guidance and supervision of experts, but also the acquisition of specific knowledge and the promotion of certain ethical values and attitudes. Initial teacher preparation given student-teachers in universities is and should therefore be a lifelong process (UNESCO, 2003; Villegas-Reimers, 1997).

Teacher preparation is changing so rapidly and so frequently around the world that even the "most recent" literature may already present models or experiences that are no longer being implemented in a particular country (Villegas-Reimers, 1997). The presentation of specific examples of models in particular countries is to illustrate options that have been developed to promote teachers' professional development rather than to describe how the process is being realised at this time in a particular part of the world.

Models of pre-service education vary from country to country. According to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) there are about three main models of pre-service teacher education. These are (1) technical model also known as the knowledge and skills model, (2) the teaching for moral endeavour model and (3) the enculturation model also called the socialisation into the professional culture model. All these have been dealt with in detail in chapter two under the literature review.

(b) Development of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special educational needs , like most educational delivery models has a chequered but interesting history. It is generally known in educational parlance that, special education developed gradually through segregation, integration, mainstreaming to special education needs (SEN). Currently, the ultimate is inclusion since the appropriateness of the previous ones have all been questioned in many circles. In short, what came out of the dissatisfaction for segregation, integration and mainstreaming was that ordinary schools and curricula needed to be re-organised to bring about improvement in learning for diverse learners (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). In this research project, the terms special educational needs and inclusion have been used interchangeably and deliberately in preference to the term integration or mainstreaming. Inclusion refers to situations in which a student with disability is 'embedded within the normative education pathways in the classroom and school' (Uditsky, 1993, p.88), and in which the teacher is responsible for the student's education. In contrast, in the Czech Republic education system, the term special education needs is used to describe situations in which learners with disabilities are located in education support units or centres, are the responsibilities of education support teachers, and spend only part of the school day in regular classroom (Eurydice, 2005).

The UNESCO (1994) Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education provides a framework for thinking about how to move policy and practice forward and stated clearly that, that document is the most significant international document that has ever appeared in Special Education. It is argued that

"regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all" (UNESCO, 2005). This implies that inclusion is possible so far as regular schools become re-organised in terms of their internal structures and practices to accommodate all learners.

(c) Teacher Education and Special Needs Education in the Czech Republic

Key players in the inclusive education process according to the UNESCO (2005) guidelines for inclusion are teachers, parents, communities, school authorities, curriculum planners, teaching institutions and students. Teachers and for that matter teacher education have the onus to see to the success of inclusion. Fisher, Frey & Thousand (2003) reported that some teachers enumerated collaborative teaching, curricular and instructional modification and accommodation, assistive technology, positive behavioural support, personal support and literacy and content instruction as the skills and knowledge needed by teachers . In the Czech Republic, teacher education is backed by legislative documents emanating from Parliament the well- known among them being the White Paper. The Act No.561 was approved in 2004 and it became functional in 2005. Categories of educational staff are described in Act No. 563 and their work has also been prescribed. Furthermore, Act No. 563 stipulates teachers' requirements as professionals. For instance, pre-school teachers need at least the upper secondary level of education to qualify while all other categories need university degrees.

Teacher preparation in the universities in the Czech Republic is specially designed to cater for the country's education needs. Apart from the theoretical aspect, there is mandatory teaching practice of varied durations spread over the entire period of study.

The Act on Educational Staff 179/2006 also outlines qualification for teachers who want to work as teachers of children with special needs. Special education teachers are educated in universities and general education teachers who wish to work as special educators, enrol for additional university education in the area. All university teacher preparation programmes include modules on the education of pupils with special needs. Teachers who want to work as SEN counsellors and or teachers of children with disabilities follow the 5-year master programme in special education in the university. Finally, in-service training for professional development is available for teachers and government provides funding for that. Teachers are trained in all disability areas namely, visual, hearing, mental and physical impairments not excluding learning disabilities and emotional and behaviour disorders (http://www.vuppraha.cz/home/kontakty).

(d) Factors that promote Special Education Needs

It is clear that the role of teachers cannot be underestimated when it comes to the implementation of special education needs. Besides the UNESCO documents, the index for inclusion developed by Booth and Ainscow(2002) outlined a number of indicators which are necessary to promote inclusion. These are (i) Pupils are entitled to take part in all subjects (ii) Teaching and learning are planned with all pupils in mind (iii) The curriculum should develop understanding and respect for differences (iv) All pupils should participate in all lessons (v) Teachers should use variety of teaching style/strategies (vi) Pupils should experience success in their learning (vii) Curriculum should seek to develop understanding of the different cultures in society (viii) Pupils must take active part in the assessment and accreditation systems (ix) Difficulties in learning should be seen as opportunities for the development of practice.

(e) Factors that inhibit the implementation of SEN

The factors that inhibit the smooth implementation of special education needs in most societies are many and varied. However, according to literature in the field, two major ones are 1. Attitudes 2. Environmental barriers. For special education needs to thrive well in any society, these two factors need to be addressed comprehensively.

1.5 Methodology

In this section, the discussion is focused on the research paradigm and design, the research questions, ethical considerations, sample, research tools, data collection procedures and analysis of data. The study is located in the constructivist paradigm hence it is a qualitative study using interpretive method. The design is a small-scale case study. The research tools employed were semi-structured interviews conducted for three (3) lecturers including a retired professor who was formerly with the Department and one (1) official from the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports. They had no problem with the English language except one who employed the services of a colleague. There was also a set of questionnaire which was completed by fifteen (15) final year students purposively selected through the recommendation of my supervisor. These students were in a position to provide me with information on their programme; finally, I gathered relevant information from official documents for the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) state that interpretivism is a research paradigm which is both natural and interactive. They explained that the "interaction implies human beings acting in relation to each other, taking each other into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting, acting again" (p.3).

1.6 Research Questions

In order to facilitate the process of investigation, the following research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. What are the objectives of the special education needs (SEN) degree programme of the Special Education Department of Charles University in Prague?
2. How does the special education needs programme impact on the communities in the Czech Republic?
3. To what extent is the special education needs programme at Charles University promoting inclusion in the country?

1.7 Significance of the study

The findings of the study will be significant to the teacher education institution as the Department could use it as a baseline study to review their special education needs programme in a holistic manner to embrace all categories of children in the country. The study is also relevant to policymakers and other stakeholders as it keeps them informed about the state of affairs of the education system for all children especially those with special needs at the basic education level in the country.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

Studies of this nature have critical ethical considerations. In consultation with my supervisor, I discussed letters of consent and permission notes which allowed me access to the Department (study site) with ease. I also collected introductory letter from my supervisor for my respondents(see Appendix A). In the letters, the objectives of the study were made known to participants and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

1.9 Limitation of the study

A major limitation of this study is the consequence of using non-probability sample. Since this study was not based on a large population, it might have limitations in terms of generalisability. For instance, one may ask, can this study be applicable in similar situations?

1.10 Dissemination

Research per se cannot and do not make decisions for policymakers and others concerned with the improvement of quality education in schools and colleges. Nor can it by itself bring about change. However, research can bring about better platform for decisions through the provision of information and insight into educational practice by way of clarifying ideas and assumptions.

The findings of this study have been earmarked for dissemination to the academic community particularly all library shelves of the three universities involved in the Erasmus Mundus SEN consortium and those in the field of inclusive education and special education needs as well as the library shelves of my university back in Ghana.

1.11 Organization of the study

The study is in six chapters with the first chapter being the introduction which captured the background information and the statement of the problem. The aims and objectives of the study were also outlined in the first chapter. In the second chapter, 1 reviewed the literature, then the third chapter was on the methodology of the work, and the ethical issues involved. Chapter four focused on the presentation and analysis of data while in

chapter five I discussed and evaluated the results of the study. In the sixth chapter, 1 summarised the findings and provided some recommendations for future research studies to conclude the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the study in order to develop a conceptual and theoretical framework which constitute the foundation core of the work. This has been put into subheadings beginning with literature on global overview of pre-service teacher education, followed by the development of special education needs (SEN). The other subheadings include teacher education in Czech Republic, special education teacher preparation in the Czech Republic, Special education needs (SEN) degree programme at Charles University, factors promoting and inhibiting inclusive education implementation in the Czech Republic and summary of the literature.

2.2 Pre-service teacher education

The first step in any process of developing a professional in any field is the initial professional preparation of that person. In teaching, this preparation takes very different shapes and forms and varies from country to country. Meanwhile, it is agreed that learning to teach is personal and complex. Personal because it depends on the student's personal learning history, his/her beliefs about learning and teaching and complex because, of a variety of skills and competences that have to be learnt in specific context (Hauge, 2000).

Different conceptual orientations about the role of teachers and their preparation have shaped the nature of the initial preparation of teachers. According to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997), there are about five orientations which are necessary for the preparation

of teachers. They include: (l)The academic orientation, (2) the practical orientation, (3) the technical orientation, (4) the personal orientation, and (5) the critical inquiry orientation.

Calderhead and Shorrock (op. cit) stated that the academic orientation emphasizes teachers' subject expertise based on solid liberal arts education and it portrays the teacher's quality and strength. In their view, the practical orientation also emphasizes the artistry and the classroom technique of the teacher with the main point being the practical experiences in the classroom, and the apprenticeship model of preparation. According to the authors, the third one which is the technical orientation emphasizes the knowledge and behaviour skills that teachers require. They asserted that the technical orientation is associated with micro-teaching and competence-based approaches backed by the behaviourist model of teaching. Calderhead and Shorrock(1997) explained that for the personal orientation, the importance of interpersonal relationships in the classroom is paramount where learning to teach is considered a process of becoming humanistic. Its key element in teaching preparation is therefore, experimentation and discovery of personal strengths. They concluded that the fifth orientation, the critical inquiry views schooling as process of social reform and the role of schools as aimed at promoting democratic values and reducing social inequities. In this perspective, the key element is to promote the development of critical and reflective practices in teachers so that they can become agents of social change.

The orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They however depend on the culture and values of a particular society, the historical time, and the society's perception of teachers and teaching so that any chosen one can have a great influence on the type of

education and professional development opportunities that may be available to teachers. No matter the orientation that a society may choose, teacher preparation is usually put into two broad categories, namely, pre-service and in-service teacher preparation. Currently, with teacher education transitioning to teacher professional development, both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation are assuming new meanings. The focus of this literature is however on pre-service teacher preparation which is also referred to in this study as teacher education.

The concept of pre-service teacher education varies from place to place with regards to institutional context, content areas, duration and forms of practical experiences for the students (Ben-Peretz, 1995). Pre-service teacher education also varies in how societies perceive its purpose. Many societies consider pre-service education to be the only professional preparation teachers receive throughout their careers but this should not be so and it is not true in many cases. There are many others including in-service teacher education as has been pointed out earlier. According to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) "during initial training and their first few years in the classroom many teachers, perhaps even majority, experience difficulties in learning to teach" (p.8). Consequently, some educators have advocated for more support to expand teacher preparation programmes.

(i) Models of pre-service teacher education:

Calderhead and Shorrock (op. cit) outline three models which pertain in different countries around the world. These are (a) the technical, or knowledge and skills model, (b) the teaching as a moral endeavour model and (c) the enculturation, or socialization into the professional culture model. Each model places emphasis on specific aspects of

learning how to teach and is based on a variety of different approaches to the learning process.

The technical, or knowledge and skills model put emphasis on the knowledge and skills which teachers need to acquire in order to contribute to classroom practices. In the past, the model focused on classroom behaviour, for example micro-teaching, questioning techniques or behaviour control during times of transition. In recent times, an effort to conceptualize these skills has been made in terms of both behavioural practices and thinking processes. In addition, this model also focuses on pedagogical content knowledge such as knowledge of children, teaching strategies, curricula, school rules, the availability of materials, subject matter, how to facilitate understanding in others, and many more.

The teaching as a moral endeavour model also focuses on a method of teaching which involves caring for young children, taking into consideration their interests, preparing them to be a part of a future society, and influencing the way in which they live and relate to each other. Some experts claim that this constitutes an important aspect of teaching and it is valued by teachers, parents and children but usually it is ignored in discussions concerning teacher training or teacher preparation. Hargreaves (1995) points out that the moral dimension of teaching makes the profession unique.

The enculturation, or socialization into the professional culture model emphasizes the socializing processes in the profession. Teaching is perceived as a demanding task that takes place in a material and ideological context. The organization, physical resources of schools, and values embedded in institutional practices exert a powerful influence on teachers, and may change the practices acquired in the institutions of teacher preparation.

This model is quite complex, as schools on the whole have multiple ideologies. Studies indicate that pressures experienced by first-time teachers when trying to integrate a new school usually explain how they can abandon what they learnt in their initial preparation as teachers, or their own exploration of their personal teaching style.

Vonk (1995), after reviewing the teacher preparation programmes existing in most Western European countries, concluded that there are two main models, namely, (i) teacher professionalism model and (ii) personal growth model. Vonk (op. cit) says teacher professionalism "is based on the principle of mastering the academic or subject knowledge and professional competence. In this model, teacher education provides future teachers with instructional skills and knowledge of pupils' learning processes and of child development" (p.291). The second model assumes that "if teachers have greater self-understanding, are more reflective, more sensitive, more empathie, and more fully self-actualized, they would inevitably be better teachers" (p.291).

(ii) Context of pre-service teacher education:

All over the world, teacher preparation programmes are offered in colleges and universities and in special institutions which may or may not be connected to a university system. In the United Kingdom, India and Israel for example, there are special institutions which train primary school teachers (McNamara, 1990; Govinda and Buch, 1990; Ben-Peretz, 1990; Tisher and Wideen, 1990). In other countries, teacher preparation is offered in universities, some in the form of short programmes of around two years' duration, others over a period of four or five years. Examples can be found in Chile, Venezuela, the USA, Japan, the Netherlands, and Germany (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Villegas-Reimers, 1998). In other countries also teacher preparation is offered in the

actual school settings under the guidance of a university or college. Such is the case in the United Kingdom (MacLennan and Seadon, 1988). In some developing countries, teachers are prepared in secondary, post-primary and post-secondary education programmes between six to nine months and a few years.

Villegas-Reimers (1998) noted that in majority of countries, the initial or pre-service teacher preparation varies depending on what level the teacher will teach after graduation. Villegas-Reimers(op. cit) postulated that the traditional format is to have secondary teachers prepared in institutions of post-secondary education, while teachers being prepared for primary schools require a lower level of education. However, there is a new trend in a majority of countries to impose the same level of preparation on all teachers, regardless of the level they will teach.

(iii) Duration of preparation programmes:

With regards to duration, despite differences, the worldwide trend seems to be to require a minimum of a bachelor's degree for entry into teacher preparation programmes (Cobb, 1999). Ghani (1990) summarized data collected in the 1980s on teacher preparation in developing countries in four regions of the world and found the total number of years of education (primary/elementary, secondary, post-secondary) for primary/elementary teachers in 24 countries to range from 8 in Nigeria, to 16 in Sri Lanka. For secondary teachers in these 24 countries, the total years spent in education ranged from 14 in Nepal and Afghanistan, to 18 in Malaysia for upper level secondary (Gimmestad and Hall, 1995).

(iv) Content of initial teacher preparation programmes:

In terms of content of teacher preparation programmes, countries emphasize different components in the curriculum or the amount of time devoted to each one. However, in general most include courses and experiences that address subject matter, the foundation of education courses, professional studies such as pedagogy and method courses, child development and practicum (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Cobb, 1999).

In the literature the debate over whether to emphasize content or pedagogy is clear and abundant. The tendency in most countries in the 1990s is to emphasize the teaching of content in the initial preparation and the pedagogy in the practicum and in the induction programmes for new teachers, as well as in other professional development opportunities. In the past the issue of content was not addressed as most focused primarily on the format, structure and organizational arrangements of education and teaching (Baker, 1999). Currently, there seems to be more focus on content as professional organizations in different disciplines and professional studies departments in universities are joining efforts with schools of education and teacher preparation institutions in the preparation of both new and experienced teachers. Also, many countries still focus on content without pedagogy and/or practice. For example in Ethiopia, as in many African countries and some Latin American countries, many teacher preparation institutions and universities offering certification programme do not offer undergraduate teachers the opportunity to experience a period of classroom teaching under supervision. Where it is done, the period is very short. (Bekalo and Welford, 1999; Villegas-Reimeirs, 1998).

Another observable trend globally is the agitation to increase the amount of time that pre-service teachers spend on practicum sites. Pre-service programmes that provide opportunities for supervised practice teaching throughout the duration of the course are

the effective ones (Jackson and Leroy, 1998). The length of the practical period varies from country to country throughout the world. Practicum in some countries takes only two weeks and in some it lasts for about one year . In some countries where the practicum is short, student teachers are required to have extensive in-service training under strict supervision. According to San (1999), studies conducted in Japan regarding pre-service and induction experiences for both primary and secondary teachers highlight the importance of being in the classroom for the development of teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge. On the international level, the trend is to increase the amount of time spent in the classroom in a formal professional practicum during the initial preparation.

(v) Selection of teachers:

Villegas-Reimers (1998) postulated that in many developing countries, and in some developed countries as well, there are a number of teachers who begin to teach without any prior training or preparation in the field. Some enter the field after receiving post-secondary education in a field other than teaching or education and some only complete secondary education. The author further claimed that in some cases, candidates only complete primary education. One of the reasons for the poor academic preparation of prospective teachers entering the field is that there are not enough qualified teachers to satisfy demand. Therefore in order to attract more teachers into the field, the quality and criteria for selection have to be compromised. For example, Benejam and Espinet (1992), indicated that some years ago in Spain, the Education Ministry mandated that there should not be any requirements for teacher education. That it should be made open to

anybody willing with or without the requisite qualification. In Malawi and some African countries also, with the concepts of Universal Primary Education, a large number of untrained teachers were recruited in order to meet the huge number of pupils in schools. In Ghana, this category of teachers who do not qualify as certificated teachers are known as pupil-teachers. Villegas-Reimers (op. cit) reported that in Pakistan, untrained local women were hired as teachers and then trained on the job via distance education approaches. This trend is quite worrying as the efficiency of teachers is related to their general education and their experiences. Thus, teachers with few years of formal education and weak academic backgrounds pose a threat to the profession; and that is why some experts on policy advise that a complete secondary education be required of prospective teachers for primary school teaching (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991).

(vi) Challenges and limitations of initial teacher preparation programmes.

1 he length of a programme or the level of preparation notwithstanding, teacher education has received scathing criticism in many countries(Villegas-Reimers, 1998; Lockheed & Vespoor, 1991; Shaeffer, 1990). For example, Villegas-Reimers (1998) enumerated some problems that bedeviled teacher preparation in Latin America including, non-qualification of some teachers, poor quality of curricula, over-dependence on theory, lack of practical aspect, short programmes and weak relationships between programmes and school practices, poor teacher preparation, low status and low salaries.

Pre-service programmes in other parts of the world receive similar criticisms. Warwick and Reimers (1995) point out that in Pakistan, the quality of teacher training is low. According to them, students and faculties lacked motivation, the facilities were in

disrepair, and there was overall lack of leadership. Sharma (1992) also reports that in India, pre-service programmes are generally of one year's duration and do not adequately prepare teachers for classroom responsibilities as many of the products leave the training institutions lacking in basic knowledge of subject matter, are deficient in pedagogical training and ill-equipped to work in schools and communities.

It is interesting to note that these criticisms are also found in developed countries. For instance, Goodlad (1990) identified some problems concerning teacher preparation in a majority of institutions in the USA and the UK. In the United States it was found out that education courses were increasingly taught by adjunct faculty and teacher education programmes and curricula were set by external agencies. There was no autonomy and programmes had little coherence. Teacher education universities and colleges had weak relations with schools . In the United Kingdom, in an attempt to solve similar problems, major responsibility for teacher education was transferred from universities to schools compelling the central government to set policies and gained greater control of the curriculum (McNamara, 1993).

(vii) Emerging trends in initial teacher education:

In a study conducted by the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC, 1999) in 12 countries which examined teacher preparation programmes, the following trends were reported : (1) There is an increase in the duration of teacher preparation programmes throughout the countries and throughout the levels that teachers are being prepared to teach. Cobb (1995) however noted that generally, primary school teachers had certificates below a bachelor's degree, while secondary teachers are usually required to have completed college or university-level programme. (2) It is also reported in the study

that most primary teachers are prepared as generalists except in Alberta in Canada and Chinese Taipei where teachers are expected to have at least one specialization and (3) There is increase in the time spent on practicum despite some variations. (4) The report concluded that there is an increase in the relationships between teacher preparation institutions and the schools (APEC, 1999).

2.3 Development of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special education has a chequered but interesting history. Historically, special education programmes were developed to protect, nurture, and teach children in whom the presence of a disability made them a burden to general class teachers and vulnerable to failure in school work and to ridicule from classmates (Meijer, Pijl, and Hegarty, 1994). From the outset, the predominant special education strategy was to organize programmes that were segregated by handicapping conditions and isolated from the mainstream on the assumption that such programmes were beneficial. Generally, it is known that special education developed gradually from hospices and asylums to segregation which developed gradually into integration and then to mainstreaming and now to special education needs (SEN). Currently, the ultimate is inclusion since the appropriateness of the previous ones have all been questioned in many circles. In short, the dissatisfaction for segregation, integration and mainstreaming was that ordinary schools and curricula needed to be re-organized to bring about improvement in learning for diverse learners (Booth and Ainscow, 2002).

In this research project, the terms special educational needs and inclusion have been used interchangeably and deliberately in preference to the term integration or

mainstreaming. Inclusion refers to situations in which a student with disability is 'embedded within the normative education pathways within the classroom and school' (Uditsky, 1993, p.88), and in which the teacher is responsible for the student's education. In contrast, according to many other countries' education systems, the term special education needs is used to describe situations in which learners with disabilities are located in education support units or centres, and are the responsibilities of education support teachers, and spend only part of the school day in regular classroom.

2.4 Special education teacher education

The training and practice of special educators have undergone rapid development and change for some time now. In Europe there are individual training programmes for teachers of learners with special educational needs in many countries. Meanwhile, other stakeholders such as the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development(OECD) try to monitor the training of special education teachers. For example, the European Trade Union Committee for Education in 2006, strongly recommended in its policy paper that the training of teachers for teaching pupils with special needs should be part of initial teacher education for all teachers as most teachers will have children with special needs in their classrooms at some stage throughout their careers. In 2003, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education conducted a survey where they monitored how teachers are trained across Europe for working with children's special educational needs. The Agency found out that most countries in Europe trained student teachers to have some form of

compulsory education concerning pupils with special needs during their initial education and that the preparation varied in duration, content and organization. The Agency found out that initial teacher education in special needs education appears to be delivered in three ways. There was the one-track approach, the two-track or dual approach and the multi-track approach,

(i) Teachers' general characteristics

A number of reports including the European Agency for the Development in Special Needs Education, 2003; the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development(2005) and the US Department of Education (1997), Denemark & Nutter (1980) outlined the basic parameters for teachers' general characteristics which include the following: (1) teachers need a firm foundation in general literacy and in the basic disciplines of the humanities, liberal arts, and sciences as prerequisite to entering the teaching profession. (2) special education teachers must be well versed in general education requirements as well as those specific to special education; that is, they must be education generalists as well as education of the disabled specialists. Reynolds (1979) suggested that their training should include acquiring knowledge of school development; basic academic skill curricula; instructional methods, including the effective use of computer- assisted instruction; and instructional and behavioural management strategies. In return, the inclusion movement has mandated that general educators have the same training in special education. General education teacher license requirements in 22 states include a requirement that teachers have some coursework related to students with disabilities. Eleven states require some practical work with students as well as coursework (U.S. Department of Education, 1997; OECD, 2005).

(3) as a key to participation in inclusion efforts, special education teachers must function as team members and as consultants, providing interaction with the general education faculty on questions concerning handicapped pupils (4) regardless of the nature and severity of a pupil's disability, all special education teachers must possess effective communication skills to work with parents of children with disabilities. These include a working knowledge of the motivational, cognitive, and social consequences associated with their pupils' handicapping conditions. Special educators should also be able to assess pupils' current levels of functioning, select and implement instructional strategies based on youngsters' learning characteristics, and evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional procedures. Lastly, teacher education programmes should provide extensive practical experience for their students. This practical experience should be initiated early in the students' training, with greater amounts of professional practice provided as students progress through the programme (Scannell & Guenther, 1981; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003).

2.5 Teacher Education in the Czech Republic

(a) Statutory documents and teacher education in Czech Republic.

The document of educational policy (National programme for the development of education, White book, 2001) emphasized high-quality teachers as a key factor in the transformation of schools and consequently in the necessary changes in the conception of the teaching profession, in the conception of roles and professional competences of teachers. According to (www.teacherqualitytoolbox.eu) this marks the starting point for the major reform of teacher education in the Czech Republic.

One of the important ways to improve the quality of education of teachers considered in the White Book (2001) is the establishment of professional standards for the individual categories of teachers as a basis for the formation of programmes of preparatory education of teachers. The professional standard should form the unifying framework for a very diversified system of preparatory education of teachers in the Czech Republic. The professional standard should become a nationwide valid criterion for accreditation of educational programmes in the sphere of teacher education and also a condition for obtaining a full qualification Act 563, 2004).

In the White Book(op. cit) it is clearly declared that the intention of the government is to significantly limit liberalism in teacher education by establishing professional standard for teachers and teacher education. A professional standard is considered a key instrument to improve the quality of teacher education, to influence more significantly curriculum of teacher education with regard to new demands on teachers related to the needs of school reform.

There are two other important legal documents. The first one is the 2004 Educational Staff Act No. 179/2006 which outlines the state requirements for qualification of teachers. There , it is categorically stated that a master's degree is a necessary condition for the qualification of primary and secondary school teachers. The second important document on the national level is the National Curriculum known as (Framework Education Programme for pre-school, primary, lower and upper secondary education - 2004). Teacher quality can be derived from the new conception of education (new goals, contents, teaching and learning strategies, new expected outcomes of education -

pupil/student competences). Emphasis is put on selected teacher competences as a key condition for the success in the curriculum reform.

(b) Expected teacher competences

Currently the expert group established by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports is working on the formulation of professional standards. The basic point of departure for the specifications of the professional standard are the competences of teachers. The model of professional competences is formed on the basis of the Delors' (1996) concept of the 'four pillars' of education, in which each 'pillar' of education is allotted a certain school function (Delors, 1996). The individual competences are related to concrete educational targets and school fonctions, and thus the requirements of the teaching profession are specified in greater detail. The teacher then implements the respective educational targets by way of the following competences. The targets are learning to know, learning to live together, learning to do, and learning to be with the resultant professional standard competences to be

- In subjects
- in didactics and psycho-didactics
- in general pedagogy
- In diagnostic and intervention
- In social, psycho-social and communication
- In managerial and normative aspects
- In professional and personality-cultivation.

All competences are specified in greater details. A concrete example of a more detailed specification is provided to illustrate two required competences of teachers of the elementary school. In case of the didactic and psycho- didactic competence the teacher is expected to:

(a) acquire the strategies of teaching and learning in connection with the knowledge of the psychological and social aspects

(b) be able to use the basic methodological repertoire in teaching individual subjects and to adapt it to the individual needs of the individual pupils and requirements of a specific school

(c) be able to create a quality learning environment

(d) have a general knowledge of educational programmes related to the respective levels of education and to be able to work with them in creating the projects of his own teaching

(e) know the theories of evaluation and their psychological aspects and to be able to use the instruments of evaluation with regard to developmental and individual characteristics of pupils and requirements of a specific school

(f) be able to use information and communication technologies to support the learning of pupils.

In case of the professional and personality-cultivating competence the teacher is expected to:

(i) have a good general knowledge in the sphere of philosophy, culture, politics, law and economy, and to be able to influence the attitudes and value orientation of pupils through them

(ii) be able to act as a representative of the profession on the basis of principles of professional ethics, to be able to provide arguments for his pedagogical procedures

(iii) be able to co-operate with colleagues on the staff in order to perform self-reflection on the basis of self-evaluation and evaluation in various subjects.

On the state level, the concept of teacher quality and professional standard are defined quite generally, as a framework. On the institutional level (universities) the professional standard is specifically more detailed for individual categories of teachers in the form of a list of competences and knowledge and of the corresponding curricula items of teacher education. This institutional professional standard is called "Profile of graduate study" (Eurydice, 2003)

By way of illustration, for example, the professional standard is projected into the profile of the graduate study of the teaching profession for the first level of the elementary school at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague.

The graduate has to acquire the professional basis of all the subjects taught at the first level of the elementary school by doing so within the specified extent and to be equipped with numerous subject combination and qualification, which is demanding by the extent and versatility of education in language, literature, mathematics and natural sciences, national history and geography and fine arts, including physical education. The graduate

is expected to integrate the contents of education and the subject matter of various teaching subjects and to mediate the essentials of a complete picture of the world to children. He or she disposes of skills of the didactic transformation of the contents of education with regard to age and individual characteristics of children of the younger school age. The graduate has to acquire deeper knowledge and skills in specialization of (music, fine art, drama education, physical education or one of the foreign languages - English, French, German).

The graduate is also equipped with the basic pedagogical and psycho- didactic competences for teaching and education. He or she is required to create favourable conditions for learning, safe and challenging learning environments to motivate and mobilise pupils, create a positive emotional and social climate in the classroom, regulate the processes of the pupils' learning - particularly adapting them to individuals from the point of view of requirements, time, extent of help, styles of learning and the like and be able to communicate well not only with pupils, but also with parents, colleagues and other social partners of the school. Finally, he or she is expected to co-operate with others in searching for suitable ways and strategies for the development of the child and of the school as a whole and be equipped with basic skills for the work with a whole range of children's population, i.e. also with children having specific educational needs, including pupils having special talents, pupils with problems as well as handicapped children including mastery of the essentials of the work with modern information and communication technology.

(c) Qualifying as a teacher

On the state level, there is another very important activity related to the professional standard of teacher education. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports established an expert group in 2004/05 involving representatives of both the Ministry and universities to create minimum standards of the teaching profession. Now there is a regulation which defines standard as a criterion for the accreditation of study programmes (used by the Accreditation Commission). The standard includes a framework structure of study components, which defines key elements of pre-service teacher education as qualification requirements and their proportions (subject study including subject didactics - 55 %, pedagogical - psychological studies - 35%, general university education - 10%, teaching practice involved in pedagogical - psychological and subject didactics studies should represent 10-12 %)(Spilkova, 2006).

Educational Staff Act 2004 defined the state requirements for qualification of teachers. There it is stated that master degree is a necessary condition for the qualification of primary and secondary school teaching.

2.6 Contemporary special education teacher education in Charles University.

In the Czech Republic, some universities educate teachers for learners with special needs and Charles University is one of them. The special education teacher preparation programme is the responsibility of the Faculty of Education under the auspices of the Department of Special Education. The Department educates teachers at the bachelor's, master's and the doctoral levels. Since 1946 to date, the preparation of primary school teachers has been going on. In addition to theoretical knowledge, the Department's

teacher education component also includes internships of various lengths in schools. The length of university study for teachers on the first level of primary school is five years. Studies are completed with a defense of the student's dissertation and the state graduation examinations; upon successful completion of these, students receive a diploma and the academic degree of Magister (Mgr) which they require to teach at the basic level. On the basis of the 1997 Lisbon Treaty on the Recognition of University Qualifications, all bachelor's and master's degree graduates are also issued an additional Diploma Supplement (DS).

The 2001 amendment to the 1998 Education Act contains the main legal arrangements of the Bologna process whose introductory principles became an important part of the strategy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and individual universities. The principles are part of the long-term aims of the ministry, the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic and the Strategy of Development of Tertiary Education for the period of 2000/2005 up to 2010.

The Charles University teacher preparation programme includes modules on the education of pupils with special needs. Teachers who want to work as SEN counselors and or teachers of children with disabilities follow the 5-year master programme in special education in the University, (http://www.vuppraha.cz).

Students are tutored in all aspects of special needs education, psychology, liberal arts subjects and other teaching subjects including counseling and physical education. Students also have practical attachment lessons with some special schools in Prague community for about six weeks but spread to cover the entire period of study. A lecturer usually in the area of methodology is in charge of the teaching practice. It must be noted

that students from other faculties also take some modules of special education courses from the department as a result the Department serves almost all faculties in the University. Students from the Department after graduation as professionals, find employment as either special education teachers in special schools or in mainstream schools but some also get employed as counselors or special education coordinators in education related offices and others work with non-governmental organizations in the field of disabilities in the Czech Republic.

2.7 Factors that promote inclusive education in the Czech Republic

Factors that promote inclusive education vary from country to country. In the Czech Republic, identified factors include but not limited to : (a) good universities-schools relationship, (b) cordial universities-ministries collaboration, (c) political will from government, (d) parental involvement in education process and (e) support from specialists and all other teachers especially those in regular and mainstream schools.

2.8 Factors inhibiting inclusive education in the Czech Republic

Two main factors which stand tall as barriers to the special education process in the Czech Republic are some instances of negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and inaccessibility to public places, transport, information and employment. Redeemably however, Gargiulo, Cerna and Hilton (1997) stated that special services for persons with disabilities have undergone significant reforms. They also acknowledged that the transformations largely reflect a change in attitudes and beliefs about people with disabilities in contemporary Czech Republic. According to these writers, a number of strategies have been initiated in an attempt to improve the quality of life of all Czechs with special needs and the efforts to achieve them include a policy of normalization by

integrating these students with special needs into regular classrooms as well as new models for educating special educators. They however ended by cautioning that the change is slow and subject to resistance.

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

The literature reviewed so far traced the global pre-service teacher education, followed by the development of special education needs. It also covered some policy documents and other sources of information relevant to the concept. This was followed by information on pre-service teacher education in general education and special needs education in the Czech Republic, followed by special education needs degree programme of the Special Education Department at Charles University, and the final aspect focused on factors promoting and hindering the implementation of inclusive education in the Czech Republic.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

I present in this chapter, the research methodology used for the study. It describes the research design and the sample of the study. Additionally, the research instruments, their administration and the data collection procedures have also been described. Reliability and Validity as well as ethical concerns have also been explained to give credibility to the research. The methodology for the study is a qualitative one. The hallmark of a qualitative approach is its flexibility, providing a structure that enables the uncovering of unexpected results and the exploration of new ideas. This approach was used in order to keep open the possibilities of finding out new paths throughout the process (Marshall, 1994; Silverman, 1993).

3.2 Research Design

The design employed for the study was the case study approach located in the qualitative paradigm. According to Punch (2006), a case study is a research strategy which focuses on the in-depth, holistic and in-context study of one or more cases; typically, case studies use multiple sources of data (p. 151). Thomas (2003) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) observed that a case study should be facilitated by efforts from multiple perspectives such as tests, questionnaires, interviews and direct and indirect observations including impressionistic interpretation of data by qualitative naturalistic studies. Hays, (2004) cited in deMarrais and Lapan, (2004) also contends that case study research involves the close examination of people, topics, issues or programmes. Unlike ethnographies, case studies seek to answer focused questions by producing in-depth

descriptions and interpretations over a relatively short period of time (p.217). According to Hays (op.cit) case studies investigate contemporary cases for purposes of illumination and understanding. This case study research took place in the Department of Special Education in the Faculty of Education in Charles University in Prague in the Czech Republic. I chose case study because the aim of the study is to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of the SEN degree programme of the Special Education Department and according to Stake (1995), case study research provides depth rather than breadth insights as it allows researchers to focus on specific situation to explore the various interactive processes within that situation for a solution to the problem.

3.3 Sample

The specific setting for the research is the Department of Special Education in Charles University. The sample consisted of three special education lecturers and fifteen final year students offering the special education degree in the Department of Special Education who were purposively sampled to provide a clear picture of the programme to the best of their knowledge. An official from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports was also interviewed.

Table 1 : Percentage of instruments sent out and retrieved

Respondents	Instrument Sent	Instrument Retrieved
Student	18	15
Lecturers	5	3
Ministry Official		
Total	24	19

3.4 Research instruments

The instruments used for the study included semi-structured interview, questionnaire and documents. The instruments were constructed with guidance from supervisors and other senior members in the Department of Special Education of the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague. The main instruments developed and used to elicit relevant data for the study were a set of semi-structured interview guide and a set of questionnaire, and official documents (see Appendices B, C and D). The study is confronted with the problem of small sample size and for that matter there may be doubts regarding reliability and validity of the study. However, the issue of difficulty in generalizing findings from a small sample study partially comes from conceiving generalisability in the same way as do investigators using experimental or correlation designs (Merriam, 1998).

Regarding this respect, Yin (2003) contends

> ' Small sample studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and

> not to populations or universe. In this sense, the small sample study, like experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and in doing a small sample study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories(analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)' (p. 10).

Yin's argument is helpful in the sense that what this small sample study seeks is not to generalize the study results from sample to a large population. This study seeks to provide a rich and thick description of events that emanate from the study to get a deeper understanding of the SEN programme which may be peculiar to only this noble University.

The questions were formulated with the view to guiding students discuss their SEN degree programme freely and objectively. For instance, items on the questionnaire sought to investigate the extent to which students participated in the teaching practice and the duration aspect of the degree programme. What they liked about the programme and what they did not like about it. Documents were also used. Lincoln and Guba cited in Frechtling and Sharp (1997), observed that document studies are potentially useful qualitative methods for project evaluation and case study research. They defined a document as "any written or recorded material" which constitutes public record or personal documents. Documents used included Education legislations of the Czech Republic such as Act No. 561and Act No.563 of 2004 and the 1998 Act No. I11

respectively; excerpts such as Educational Staff Act No. 179/2006 from the White Book(2001) and the Framework Education Programme including other relevant documentaries, European Commission(EC) A special education accounts of member countries, Organization of Economic Cooperation for Development (OECD) and Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) publications and research articles from the internet.

Interviews are one of the richest sources of data in a case study and usually the most important type of data to be collected. Interviews provide the researcher with information from a variety of perspectives. Yin (1994) stated:

> 'Overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well-informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation. They can provide shortcuts to the prior history of the situation, helping you to identify other relevant sources of evidence. However, the interviews should always be considered *verbal reports* only. As such, they are subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation. Again, a reasonable approach is to corroborate interview data with information from other sources' (p.85).

Preparations towards the interviewing process involved a much slower pace as the respondents were quite pre-occupied with a lot of activities - administration, lecturing and examinations. The semi-structured interview guide specified areas to be covered and the questions to be posed. As in the case of the questionnaire, the interviewer investigated issues on programme objectives, content of programme and teaching practice activities (Yin, 1994; Frechtling and Sharp, 1997). This technique was used for the respondents in administrative and teaching positions to provide information that was used for in-depth elicitation of information. The technique had the advantage of flexibility. It afforded the interviewer the opportunity to obtain first-hand information on the topic. In spite of the advantages that were derived by using the interview, it was quite bureaucratic and time-consuming.

The interview guide had ten items and the questionnaire had twenty questions for the various respondents . Questions centred on the strengths (possibilities) and limitations of the. SEN degree programme. The semi-structured interview explored, elicited and captured respondents' own perception on relevant issues freely" (Lofland and Lofland, cited in Frechtling and Sharp, 1997, p. 14).

The documents reviewed included but not limited to the White Book (2001), also the Act No. 561, Act No. 563, Educational Staff Act No.179/2006 and the 1998 Education Act No.l 11(all of the Czech Republic) from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

3.5 Instrument administration and data collection

The study was conducted from February to July, 2010. The questionnaire for the final year students was hand-delivered and administered to them personally in class after my supervisor who is one of their lecturers had told them about me and my purpose in the

classroom that morning. Thus, after the introduction, 1 talked briefly about myself and my work as a teacher educator back in my home country, and 1 explained my research topic to them. Without much ado, I seized the opportunity to explain the procedures for completing the questionnaire to the participants and this was repeated in the Czech language by my supervisor to the students which facilitated their comprehension of the items. Thereafter, the respondents were allowed to study and complete the fifteen-item questionnaire in class. While the respondents were completing the questionnaire, my supervisor was also explaining some of the questions to the students who seemed to have some difficulty with the English language. After about thirty minutes, they completed the questionnaire and I thanked them for their co-operation and collected them for analysis and interpretation. As they were revising for their forth-coming end of semester examination, I left the class immediately after collecting the responses.

Apart from the students who completed the questionnaire, 1 conducted semi-structured interviews for the lecturers. Before 1 approached the lecturers concerned, I sent a letter to them explaining my purpose and intention of conducting a short semi-structured interview with them. After responding to my request, I met with them on the appointed date, venue and time on one-on-one basis for the exercise. Having interacted with most of them in the Department earlier on before the exercise sufficiently established the cordial working relationship needed for such an academic work. As usual, I introduced myself and handed my introduction letter to the interviewee. After reading the letter of introduction, I proceeded with the interview in a relaxed and conversational manner. Apart from one of the lecturers who could understand the English language but had some difficulties with fluent expression and for that matter sought the services of another

lecturer friend who speaks English language fluently, there was no problem at all. 1 also sought permission to tape record the responses and it was agreed upon. It is interesting to hear that some of the lecturers were ready to furnish me with more information as and when some responses came up in their minds and so 1 was asked to forward the semi-structured interview guide via email to them which I did. It is important to put on record that I received maximum co-operation from the respondents especially the lecturers as some even willingly provided me with documents on the teacher education and special education system in the Czech Republic. On the whole, the retrieval rate of the questionnaire was about 90% since some two male students were late to class and so did not participate in the assignment.

3.6 Reliability & Validity.

From the epistemological basis of qualitative research, reliability and validity issues are of real concern to researchers as they are about whether the same concepts have any value in determining the quality or sustainability of qualitative evidence of the study. "Validity is concerned with whether the findings are 'really' about what they appear to be about (Robson, 2002:93)". In this study validity issue is addressed using triangulation which involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research (Robson, 2002:174) I used both data triangulation and more than one method of data collection. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) it is inappropriate to apply the concepts as they are applied in mathematics and the physical sciences to qualitative research as they cause considerable confusion. In their broadest conception however, reliability meaning "sustainable" and validity meaning "well grounded" is relevant for qualitative research since they help to define the strength of the data.

Generally, reliability is understood to concern replication of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken. Hughes and Sharrock (1997), Marshall and Rossman (1999) including many other constructivists have argued against the replication of qualitative research. Those in favour of qualitative studies however state that reliability in qualitative research broadly describes the dependability, consistency and or repeatability of a study's data collection, interpretation, and analysis. This refers to the appropriate collection, analysis and interpretation of data. To ensure the reliability of my instruments, 1 used the internal consistency reliability approach. That is, 1 used groups of items to measure different aspects of the same concept. For instance, while students were asked to talk about duration of the teaching practice, lecturers were also interviewed on the supervision and weighting aspect of the teaching practice.

The purpose was to gain insight into the relative strengths and weaknesses of the instruments. The study was conducted from February, 2010 to July, 2010. With regard to the content validity of the instruments, the items centred mainly on the SEN degree programme. Items centred on theoretical and practical aspects and the adequacy and relevance of the programme. According to Longstreet and Shane (1993), such items are humanistic in nature as they follow broad and often indefinite guidelines thereby rendering judgement to a great extent subjective mainly according to the views and perceptions of participants. The items were verified by my supervisors. However, the reliability coefficient alpha could not be computed because the instruments were not coded in the same metric. According to Green, Salkland and Akey (1999), in conducting a reliability analysis, "all items share the same metric (p.306)".

3.7 Ethical Considerations

1 informed respondents about the need to record the interviews and sought their approval to do that. After transcription, 1 debriefed the respondents to confirm the accuracy of the information. Robson (2002:203) highlights the pertinent issues involved with research for example, whose interests the research is serving. The purpose of this study is the completion of a Masters level dissertation and is not being undertaken to serve any other interests. Participants were be made aware of this objective.

3.8 Scoring and Analysis

To facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the Special Education Needs degree programme of the Special Education Department at Charles University in Prague, both descriptive statistics such as percentages and averages in addition to in-depth description were used. The main points in the documents pertaining to the topic were also highlighted and discussed.

Data collected were first categorised according to the various instruments for easy identification and reference. The three research questions were developed into themes on programme objectives, its impact on the Czech community and how it is promoting inclusion in the country and these were used to facilitate the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data analysis for interpretation. To facilitate the process, I begin with a brief description of the study site and the degree programme as the preliminary results .This is followed by the main analysis. Charles University in Prague is one of the oldest universities in Central Europe. It was established in 1348 originally with 4 faculties. Today, Charles University is composed of 17 relatively independent and self-governing faculties and many departments which are located in Prague, Pilsen and Hradec Kralove (www.rug.nl/jomite/partners/universitvprague.). Charles University has over 47,000 Czech students and over 4,500 international students studying various degree programmes.

The Department of Special Education in the Faculty of Education is the study site. The Department runs the following degree programmes: bachelor's, master's, doctoral and the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr SEN. Others include the distance education and counseling programmes. The Department educates students and professionals such as teachers and other pedagogical staff for employment in primary and secondary schools in the country. Graduates from the Department also work in special and mainstream schools teaching in nursery, primary to secondary schools.

4.2 Main Analysis : Analysis of semi-structured interview data

The study aimed at finding answers to three research questions and for the analysis process to be smooth, I categorized the data under three distinct themes derived from the

research questions. The first theme is : **Objectives of the Special Education Needs** (SEN) **degree programme of the Special Education Department at Charles University in Prague.**

In reaction to the research question: What are the objectives of the SEN degree programme of the Special Education Department, the following were some of the responses: *We educate our students to work in all primary and secondary schools after completing the programme. Some of them also work in other sectors. They are not obliged to be necessarily teachers. Some of them work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as project managers. It is therefore a study programme at various degree levels. There is special education provision not meant for teaching and there is one with subject combinations. In that case, students can combine special education with psychology or counseling or any teaching subject such as language. Some of them also enroll on the master's programme directly.*

In another development, one respondent answered the question thus: *The objective is to educate specialists in the field of disability education not only teachers. For example, some do not teach but they prepare projects for children out of school. They have some qualification but they do not teach subjects. Their duty is to work on out-of-school projects and materials. A second objective is to inform other students in the university of all the subjects; for example, kindergarten, basic school and gradually move towards inclusive education. These are organized through short informative courses for about a semester of 60 hours. Other students also come and take courses in special education and so you see the Department has a special role to serve everybody.*

A second related question on the objectives of the SEN programme was: How would you evaluate your SEN degree programme in terms of academic, didactics and pedagogic aspects? The responses were as follows: *It is adequate because it is well-balanced; for instance, I am a specialist in visual impairment and we teach our students courses on ophthalmology with psychology and psychological development in addition to practicum. And in my area for example, the students are not many so we have ample time to train them in orientation and mobility, braille reading and writing and other clinical practices. The same goes for the other areas also.*

The other respondent said: *in terms of academic, we are involved in a number of research activities and for the didactic we educate the students as to how to impart knowledge to their pupils and regarding the pedagogic aspect, students are taken through the methods of teaching the various subjects to the pupils.* The respondent added that *the focus is more on the academic but for those studying to become teachers, we emphasize more on the pra.ctical aspects for them because that is an area that teachers are found wanting.* The respondent again said that, *as a result the University and for that matter the Department co-operates with schools in the community so that the students have the opportunity to work in the schools under the teachers as mentors; but it needs more financing in view of a few problems that have been identified,* the participant concluded.

The third item relating to the first theme was: Kindly describe the theoretical (content) and practical aspect of your Special Education Needs (SEN) degree programme briefly but accurately. Responding, one participant said: *The programme is more theoretical than practical; the theory is about 70% and the practical aspect is also about 30%.*

After the practicum, we educate them to reflect on the practice and to look out for topical issues in the field of disability in the communities.

A second response to that question was: *The SEN programme can be said to be composed of 80% theory and 20% practical activities; usually, if the number of students is large for instance, around 120, practically, you adopt co-operative learning strategy since there may not be enough space for many students, you can ask them to do some practical work such as instructing them to visit the community to interact with persons with disabilities and experience their living and find out more about them and come to present a report. Such an activity can be in the home, cinema or workplace. An activity like this can be done after classes and there must be evidence that it was done and done well. Some students' first encounter with adults with disabilities have established long lasting cordial relationships with these individuals ever since.*

The last interview question on the objective of the SEN degree programme was on the duration of the teaching practice and the following were the responses: *(i) The teaching practice is for one semester with specified number of hours usually 20 hours for the degree programme followed by reflective report writing. And only one lecturer is in charge of the teaching practice. Perhaps in future, we can use the distance education students to improve upon this area because they are more than the regular students, (ii) The duration differs from course to course. It is usually handled by lecturers who teach methods. There are also mentors in the schools but they are not enough and it calls for some sort of training of more mentors.*

The second research question tried to find out the impact of the degree programme on the Czech community. Therefore, the second theme for analysis is: **the impact of the** SEN **programme on the Czech community.** The main related interview question to this research question was: "What is the Government's policy on the training of teachers for special education needs children in the Czech Republic?" The following were the answers **to** the question: (**1**) *Well you need to understand that universities are to some extent autonomous and so every university with faculty of education draws its own programmes. I cannot generalize to embrace all other universities in the country but at least our university draws its SEN programme in line with the government's working group on the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education and I have no doubt that teacher education is one of the areas of concern. Some of our students practice in mainstream schools and other students from different faculties and departments come to take special education courses from our department. This is aimed at creating awareness and sensitization. (2) I will say that the government supports teacher education because there are good laws concerning education, social affairs, accessibility and employment which give the disabled more privileges than before. With the laws and legislations things seem okay but practically, there are bottlenecks which I will say can be solved if the government officials are committed.* Other related answers to the question were: (a) *There are many issues to consider so it is difficult to focus on one particular thing for improvement. However, if we know the needs of the students or the needs of the schools we can change accordingly. So to improve upon the teacher education programme will depend on these two factors - students' needs and needs of the schools, (b) There is need for more special teachers. It will be better to focus more on the whole life of individuals*

with disabilities. That way we can cater broadly for all persons with disabilities from kindergarten to the adults including the aged. We should also focus on the profound categories and not only the educables.

In another development a respondent said the impact of the SEN degree programme on the Czech community was great. The respondent commented: *In one of my researches that I conducted in 2005/2006 academic year for presentation to students from Minnesota University, it was revealed that there were about 140 students with SEN in Charles University reading various degree programmes. The University also gives them some financial support to pay for services rendered to them in the form of reading, brailling and recording.*

The third theme for analysis is: **Promotion of Inclusion in Czech by the SEN** degree **programme** which has been derived from the question, "How is the programme promoting Inclusion in the Czech Republic?" The following are responses meant for the interview question on the practicality of inclusion in the Czech Republic: *Inclusive Education is a process. It is developing gradually in many countries. Learners with dyslexia, physical disabilities and emotional and behaviour disorders are integrated in some mainstream schools. It takes time. The barriers to the concept reside in people. It can be said that, there is inadequate preparation on the part of mainstream teachers and that is attitudinal. Another barrier is that special education teachers are also afraid of losing their job. I understand that inclusion brings about diversity - choice and for that matter I don't like inclusive extremism where people try to impose their ideas on others.* Another respondent said: *Inclusion is theoretically practicable but to some extent. For some children, it is okay but it cannot suit all children. All schools cannot be changed*

into inclusive schools. In the Czech Republic, to put a child into an inclusive setting, there is need to assess or evaluate the needs of the child. First, what are the child's needs? Second, parents must be involved in the decision making process. If some conditions are not favorable in the mainstream school, and there appear to be better conditions in special schools where there are less children, better facilities and opportunities for socialization which will benefit the child, the choice of a special school can take precedence over a mainstream school.

Another item which sought to find out how inclusive education is being promoted was: In what ways do you collaborate with the Ministries of Education Youth and Sports and Social Affairs, Teachers and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities to promote inclusive education in the country? Answering, respondents unanimously replied that: *Yes, there is co-operation and collaboration among the lecturers and the various agencies and ministries. Individual lecturers are invited to work with officials from the ministries on government projects.* One respondent remarked: *For example, as we speak now, the Head of Department is assisting the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to work on the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education. Other lecturers depending on their areas of specialization, interest and affiliation with agencies do research activities or consultancy work for the agencies. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also work with us. Some of them invite our university lecturers to special groups formed by the ministries to help prepare legislation or evaluate their projects. Our lecturers and students sometimes exchange talks with experts in the field working with NGOs serving the disabled usually in the areas of counseling and early intervention. All these are geared towards inclusion particularly social inclusion.*

Having finished with the lecturers, my supervisor suggested that I could contact an official from the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports to get some information from there as well. I agreed with him because they are responsible for executing the Government's plan on the orders of the Minister of that sector. A quick arrangement for a short interview to get the view of the official on the government' s plan towards inclusive education in the Czech Republic was made and carried out. The official responded to the question on the Government's policy towards inclusion as follows: *Our national activities and for that matter, our position on inclusion is very clear. We support inclusion and the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MEYS) prepared a working document on the concept of inclusion which was accepted by the Government. It is known as the National Action Plan for Inclusion. It is a roadmap on how the Government will finance the implementation of inclusive education in the Czech Republic. The first plan is in two phases and this will be piloted in three years and the results submitted to the Government again to look at the critical areas such as finance, teacher education and other changes that may have to be made in the general education system. This will be a gradual process, not radical. People should understand that all special schools cannot be closed down. There are smaller number of children with problematic psychiatric and other disorders so special schools will not be closed. Such children will definitely need intensive support. Each individual child has to be considered as a unique individual. For instance, the deaf children must be taught their mother tongue which is "sign language" first before they are introduced to another language. In Europe, some countries are adopting the radical approach to inclusion but even though I am a supporter of inclusion,*

I think we need to go gradually. The system must be ready before we take off on a large scale nationwide.

Reacting to the Government's position on special education teacher preparation, the official said: *That is also part of the National Action Plan. Intensive communication has started with the various faculties and departments of education. Formerly, special education teachers were separated from the mainstream teachers and even their training was made up offew subjects. Now, there is need for in-depth content for both the special education and all other teachers. There need to be cooperation between special education teachers and other teachers. They have to exchange ideas and experiences in the areas of methodology, counseling and resource services. The Ministry is not working in isolation so we collaborate with the universities and other agencies such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serving the disabled to work on the National Action Plan.*

The Ministry official concluded the interview by stating that: *The Government helps the various Departments in the area of research, networking and hiring of experts, specialists or consultants from within the Faculties and Departments to do projects such as the National Action Plan that we have just discussed.*

4.3 Data from the questionnaire have also been analysed as follows.

The questionnaire was personally administered in class to a group of final year bachelor degree students. The number on roll was 18 out of which 15 completed the questionnaire constituting 83% of the class. Two of the three absentees were male students who entered the class after the exercise while all the respondents were females. The reason for

including the students was to clearly understand how as students they see the programme from their perspective. One of the students was having special educational needs. She had problems with mobility and grasping.

To facilitate the process of analysis, I grouped the items into three under the themes generated from the research questions and for research question one which I themed **objectives of the** SEN **degree programme,** I pooled items 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 18 to answer it.(see Appendix D) The items were:

2. Why do you want to teach or work with special needs children?

3. Do you find the SEN programme adequate in content? Yes/No. Please explain.

5. Which categories of SEN children do you focus on in your programme?

6. Underline the category of SEN children you are specializing to work with.

7. Do you encounter specific difficulties in your studies regarding the SEN programme? Yes/No. Explain.

10..What special skills have you acquired to teach or work with special needs children after university?

18. What are some of the things that you like about your SEN degree programme?

Responses to item 2 were varied as follows :

Working with children is a hobby; it is my interest; I like the handicapped; / want to help children with SEN; because my job will be fun; the work is fine ; they have right to education as other children without SEN; due to my handicap situation, I have experience in disability issues; 1 am interested in it.

For item 3, nine respondents forming 60% answered "yes" while six respondents (40%) answered "no". Their various explanations were:

Malo praxe; little practice; Yes but students need more practice; a few of practice; a little special pedagogy information for practical work; many information of the different ' 'oboru ' 'and little special pedagogy; 'malo praxe (vedeme) v *rámci studia '.*

Participants' answers to items 5 and 6 showed that some students focused on more than one category of special needs children on the programme as they selected two or more disability areas. In all, no students indicated that they focused on the blind and deaf individuals. However, 10 students selected intellectual disability; 2 students, mental handicap; 2 students, physical disability; 4 students, EBD; 3 students, "psychopedie"; 1 **student, 'somatopedie'; and 2 students, 'etopedie'.**

Six respondents indicated that they have specific difficulties with the SEN programme; two of them considered it to be *' 'too broad, not enough J'ocus"* while nine indicated that they have no problem with the programme. On special skills acquisition to be able to work with the disabled after university education, 7 respondents selected diagnostic teaching but indicated that they have learnt that for different lengths of time. Some said they learnt it for a semester; some four semesters and others half a year. Four respondents also chose 'ergotherapy' but did not indicate how long they have learnt that. Similarly, 1 wrote vocational therapy and 1 'musimotherapy' without indicating the length of time. One selected braille and indicated 1 semester; two selected sign language and indicated 6 semesters and one said she has learnt alternative communication for 3 years. The final item under the first theme was answered by only one participant whose response was: "Diagnosduct' ustav pro mladez; Zakladni Skola Specialni and Zakladni Skola Prakticua".

The second theme raised from the research question was: impact of the SEN **programme on the Czech community.** Items 8, 9, 15 and 16 were marshaled to answer that research question. Item 8 found out from students where they would like to work after university education. Responding, 14 students said they would like to work in a special school after their university education while only one student said she preferred mainstream system to the special school. Assigning reasons for their choice of answers to item 9, one student who would like to work with adults explained: it is easier for me to communicate with; I'm interested in employment, aging, etc.

The only student who selected mainstream school as where she preferred to work after university retorted interrogatively: mainstream - why just teach in the basic school? All the rest who chose special school offered these various explanations: (i) I work in a special school, is interesting; it's heterogeneous.(ii) Little group of children, interesting job. (iii) It is more important, (iv) I have a lot of experience from my former special school; mainstream schools in our city and region are full; in that time, no place for new teacher, (v) special school is for me more important, (vi) children with SEN need more care; it is larger satisfaction, (vii) The study prepare me for work in special school. It is more specific than study on teacher in mainstream school, (viii) work with handicapped children (ix) my school is specialised for this work, (x) because I graduated from this university; I am interested in intellectual disabilities, (xi) I have been working there for 4 years. I like it. (xii) I decide for it before many years. It is interesting for me.

The item number 15 attracted a unanimous response in the affirmative. In their view, every student-teacher in Univerzita Karlova v Praze should learn or know something about SEN and the following were the reasons adduced: 1. any primary school pupil may

The responses to the last question was also unanimous. All respondents pointed out that the Government should make available more money for the education and salaries of teachers as well as other professionals in the field to attract more workers.

4.4 Content analysis.

I conclude this section with analysis of the official documents that I reviewed in relation to the topic. The Act No. 561, 2004 of the Czech Republic is one of the acts that guides the education system of the Czech Republic. As an Act, it is a parliamentary document of over one hundred pages. It is also known as the Education Act of the Czech Republic rwww.msmt.cz). The Act gives legal backing to pre-school, basic , secondary, tertiary professional and other education systems in the country. The Act has many provisions put in nineteen parts and 191 sections. In the Act have been outlined the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

For. this study, 1 have focused on the first part of the Act with emphasis on section 16. This aspect is on the education of children, pupils and students with special education needs. This section of the Act defines who is a child, pupil or student with special education needs in the context of the Czech Republic as "a disabled person, or a person disadvantaged in terms of health condition or social position". It also defines in the subsequent clauses *disability* and *social disadvantage* in clear and unambiguous terms. The fifth to eighth clauses outline the entitlements or benefits of children with SEN in the Czech Education system. The last clause is on the role of head teachers of schools for children with SEN.

be disabled; 2. Every teacher should be able to teach children with SEN; 3. It is important; 4. It is important; the children with SEN are becoming more and more with different characteristics; 5.integrating children in mainstream schools; 6.because without knowledge of the problem he/she cannot offer the necessary help; 7.there are SEN children in regular schools; 8.more and more children are being integrated in mainstream schools so every teacher must be conversant with how to assist them; 9. it is now a condition that teachers should know something about integration; 10.in any school, there can **be** handicapped children so teachers should be informed how to handle such situations; 11 .trend of inclusion make it necessary that teachers should know more about **the** concept of SEN; 12.SEN children are all over in regular schools.

The third theme is on **the promotion of inclusive education in the Czech Republic. There** was not much interrogation on this point for the students. This is so because from **the** literature, it became evident that the Czech Republic and for that matter the Czech Government has now commissioned an expert group to draw up a comprehensive National Action Plan for Inclusive Education which is working very hard on the project. Undoubtedly, the unanimous demonstration of affirmative response of the students to item 15 is a pointer to that fact.

Items 14 and 20 stood out on their own. Reacting to item 14, the students were of the opinion that clever individuals with physical and sensory disabilities can be supported to attend university but not those with mental retardation. In a nutshell, they stated that it depended on the type and degree of the disability as well as parental and individual support. Meanwhile, the student with special needs answered: Yes, because of my experiences.

The next relevant document I reviewed for the study is the Act No. 563, 2004. This Act is a collection of laws on the pedagogical staff and on the amendment to some other Acts. In line with the legal terms of reference to the Ghanaian teacher, I refer to this Act as "the code of practice and conditions of service " as it stipulates the roles and responsibilities of the pedagogical staff and their career development.

The Act No. 563 is in 5 parts and 41 sections. For the purpose of this study, I focused on section 18 which is on teachers of children with SEN. The Act identifies pedagogical workers in the Czech Republic to include teachers, educators, special education needs teachers, psychologists, teachers responsible for leisure activities, teacher assistants, coaches or pedagogical managers. The qualifications, characteristics and roles are clearly spelt out. For example, a pedagogical worker should not be a convict and whose job function involves direct educational function.

The section 18 concentrates on the teacher at special educational needs class or school. It stipulates among other things that "a teacher at special educational needs class or school shall acquire professional qualifications through higher education acquired by completing an accredited master's study programme in the field of pedagogical sciences focused on special educational needs".

The White Book (2001) on education policy is another vital document that I reviewed for the study. Like the earlier ones, the White Book is not an Act. It is a Government document established in 2001 as a strategy for further politico-socio-economic development of the Czech Republic. In the White Book, education and human resource development have been highlighted as priority areas for development which involves participation of all stakeholders in education including social partners, parents, teachers'

associations and other groups of civic society. The White Book empowers the citizens or the whole society to take its destiny into their own hands but also makes it clear that the changes in the education system will be gradual, depending on further changes and conditions in the society. According to Spilkova (2006), the book is an evaluation of analyses of the Czech education systems by professors from the universities and education administrators which spanned 5 years. In brief the White book is expected to bring gradual increase in public expenses in education in order to keep up with the rest of highly developed countries and to reach the level of 6% GDP. The basic strategic aims of the White Book can be summed up to include:

1. The implementation of the system of lifelong learning for all.
2. The adaptation of educational and study programmes to the everyday needs of the knowledge society.
3. Monitoring and assessment of quality and effectiveness of education.
4. Support of the entire change and openness of educational institutions.
5. The change of role and professional prospects of pedagogical and academic workers.
6. Transition from centralized management to accountable shared decision making.

4.5 Summary

The chapter focused on the presentation and analysis of data gathered for the study. 1 presented them under three themes based on the research questions and the research instruments namely, semi-structured interview guide, questionnaire and documents. The interviews were more or less in two phases; one for lecturers and the other for an official from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in charge of the National Action Plan

for Inclusion. Information from the interviews shed more in-depth knowledge and understanding on what I gathered from the documentary literature on special education teacher preparation in universities in Europe with particular reference to Charles University (the study site).

This was corroborated by the students' views regarding their degree programme. I included a lot of verbatim responses to put the study in its natural context. It is expected that the next chapter on discussion and evaluation, would blend the various sources into a triangulated piece to produce a vivid description of this qualitative study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research vis-a-vis the literature and evaluate the data analysed in the previous chapter. This qualitative study is a reflection of the semi-structured interview information gathered from lecturers and the official from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as well as information gathered from the questionnaire completed by final year students from the Department of Special Education (the study site) on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) degree programme at Charles University in Prague. I also used information from the internet and official documentary sources on education and special education in the Czech Republic as contained in the literature review to support the other sources of information. These sources of information have indisputably enhanced my understanding and knowledge of the SEN degree programme in the Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague as well as other SEN degree programmes from other universities and I believe that back home, it will enhance my work as a teacher educator.

In chapter two, the section on literature review, I based the study on the following sub-headings: pre-service teacher education, development of special educational needs, special education teacher preparation, teacher education in the Czech Republic, contemporary special education teacher education in Charles University with the expectation that information from the selected sub-headings together with data gathered through the interview and questionnaire should lead me to acquire in-depth understanding and knowledge of the topic under study as a teacher educator.

From tlie research, 1 tried to » I i for answers to tire following questions:

1. What are the objectives ofthe SEN degree programme at Charles University?
2. How does the SEN degree programme impact on the communities in the Czech Republic?
3. **To what extent is the SEN degree programme promoting inclusion in the Czech Republic?**

5.2 **Discussion and Evaluation on objectives of the** SEN **degree programme at Charles University.**

This part was aimed at answering the first research question. In so doing, the theoretical and the practical components of the programme were investigated. From the interview and questionnaire information coupled with the documentary evidence, it was revealed that the SEN degree programme is a 4-year study programme with theory and practicum components. From both the interview and the questionnaire data analysis, **I** found out that **the programme is not only for teachers but also for other professionals who are interested** in special education and those who work in the area of disabilities as well as those who are in public and private administrative positions.

Theoretical aspect of the SEN degree programme: The interviewees and students declared that the content of the SEN programme is composed of theory and practicum. The lecturers explained that the theory could be estimated to be 70% or 80% while the practicum could be 30% or 20% in weighting and the two combine to produce the competent graduate teachers and indeed it confirms what Bekalo and Welford (1999) and **Villegas-Reimers** (1998) stated:

> 'The debate over whether to emphasize content or pedagogy is clear and abundant. Currently, there seems to be more focus on content as professional organizations in different disciplines and professional studies departments in universities are joining efforts with schools of education and teacher preparation institutions in the preparation of both new and experienced teachers'.(p. 77).

Similarly, reports from the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2005) outlined that teachers need a firm foundation in general literacy and in the basic humanities, liberal arts, and sciences as prerequisite to entering the teaching profession. They added that special education teachers must be well versed in general education requirements as well as those specific to special education.

Legal documents on education in the Czech Republic added credence to the need for quality teacher preparation programmes and as a result, Act No. 563 was put in place to ensure professional standard of teachers. In compliance to the legal provision, the universities and for that matter the faculties and departments of education are guided by "the profile of graduate study" to ensure students acquire the professional basis of all subjects taught at the basic or elementary school level. The graduate is taught subjects like languages, mathematics, natural sciences, history, geography, fine arts, and physical education through the integration of the content of education and teaching subjects.

Regarding teacher competences, the Accreditation Commission of the Czech Republic in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the universities in

2004/2005 came up with the standard for teachers which defined pre-service teacher qualification requirements to include subject-study including subject didactics 55%, pedagogical-psychological studies 35% and general university education 10% with teaching practice embedded in the 35%.

It is therefore interesting to note that even though the lecturers considered the SEN degree programme adequate and balanced, a group of the students also regarded the SEN degree programme to be too theoretical. These students considered the lopsided nature of the programme to be a disadvantage. They expressed their points in Czech language thus: 'malo praxe; malo praxe (vedeme) v rámci studia'; which means that there is need for more practicum (teaching practice). I have already indicated that even though many countries agree that initial teacher education should comprise both theoretical content and the teaching practice aspect, the weighting varies from country to country depending on contextual factors. It is however clear that in all acceptable cases, theory outweighs practicum and so this cannot be regarded as inadequacy of the degree programme at all.

Teaching practice aspect of the SEN degree programme

Both the theory and the teaching practice aspects put together qualify teachers to practise as professionals. As a result, the teaching practice component constitutes an essential part **of the** teacher education degree programme. Its aim is to develop in the students practical knowledge and related guidance so that the fresh graduate teacher will become conversant with the nature of work on the field, understand the aims and functions and organisation **of** the school and learn or acquire the necessary qualities of becoming a responsible teacher. The study revealed that there is a well designed teaching practice

component as part of the SEN degree programme in the Department of Special Education in Charles University which is spread over the entire programme of study. It is administered by lecturers who have specialised in methodology and these lecturers work closely with the primary schools in the community to enable the students go for their practicum and write reflective reports at the end of the period. This conforms to what Scannell & Guenther (1981) expressed in the literature. They stated that teacher education programmes should provide extensive practical experience for students which should be initiated early in the students training, with greater amounts of professional practice provided as students progress through the programme. Jackson and Leroy(1998) also support this assertion when they pointed out that the global trend of argument was to increase the amount of time that pre-service teachers spend on practicum sites. In their view, pre-service programmes that provide opportunities for supervised practice teaching throughout the duration of the programme are the effective ones.

5.3 Discussion and Evaluation on the impact of the SEN degree programme on the Czech Community.

The impact of teacher education programmes in communities (where there are universities and schools) cannot be overemphasized. The Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague has been running the SEN programme since 1946 to date. It has produced and continues to produce graduate teachers every year to teach in schools in the 14 regions of the country. These teachers according to Act 561 and the White Book 2001 of the Czech Republic teach in nursery, primary and secondary schools. In other words, the Department also produces teachers who work in 'materska

škola', 'zakladni škola', 'stoedni odboma škola', 'stoedni odborné škola', 'vyssi odborná škola', 'vysoká škola and nastavbove stadium' to eater for all categories of children in the country. As I explained in the preceding chapters, the White Book 2001 which is not an Act but a policy document on education is the guiding principle for education transformation in the Czech Republic. Among other things it stipulates:

> "The level of education, the quality of performance of the education system and above all the extent to which a society is able to utilise the creative potential of all its members have become decisive factors in the continuing development of society and economy".

The statement above illustrates the Czech Government's commitment to its education system of which the Department of Special Education at Charles University is part especially whose mission and vision it is to provide equal and appropriate education for all its citizens.

The Charles University Community

Charity they say begins at home. The influence of the SEN degree programme on the University Community is enormous. The information from the interview revealed that apart from students in the Faculty of Education and the Department of Special Education, students from other faculties and departments register and study some modules in the Department of Special Education. This practice undoubtedly creates awareness in them about disability issues. From the students' questionnaire also, these respondents unanimously upheld the idea of other students coming to offer courses in the Department. It makes the University community aware about available facilities in the institution for

special needs students. Specific provisions to accommodate students who have special needs in Charles University can be found in the linguistic centre of the Arts Faculty, the mathematics and physics departments, office of the Vice Rector, Faculty of law, Faculty of theology and many more including sports department. The following websites are replete with information on Charles University's assistance to special needs students; http://www.eud.eu/Czech Republic and http://www.cuni.cz/UK. The University has a Counseling Centre for students with special needs; other centres are also found in the various departments which serve students with special needs particularly those having vision impairment, hearing and hard-of-hearing problems, mobility impaired as well as those having specific difficulties such as reading, writing and other communication problems. Lifts and wheel-chairs are provided to make buildings accessible to the physically challenged.

The Prague Community

Prague is one of the 14 regions in the Czech Republic. It is the capital city of the country with many institutions of learning and industries. It is a beautiful tourist centre of attraction in the heart of Europe. Charles University is located in Prague and the Department of Special Education can also be found in Prague. The students in the Department mostly reside in Prague city and its environs. They study in the university and go home. The impact of the SEN degree programme on such a community cannot be underestimated more so when the students do their teaching practice in the community schools. It can be said that this has brought about positive attitudinal change in citizens towards persons with disabilities as noted in the literature by Gargiulo, Cerna and Hilton

(1997) who stated that special services for persons with disabilities have undergone significant reforms. They also acknowledged that the transformations largely reflect in changes in attitudes and beliefs about people with disabilities in contemporary Czech Republic. These authors added that a number of strategies have been initiated to improve the quality of life of all Czechs with special needs through normalisation by integrating children with SEN in regular classrooms.

The Czech Community

The SEN degree programme of the Special Education Department at Charles University in Prague has been acclaimed far and wide. This is evident from the various websites on the country's special education needs and disability issues. On the websites of Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED), Inclusion Europe, Inclusion International, European Commission, OECD and many others, one is likely to find research articles by one or two of the lecturers of the Department. (See for example, Siska, 2009 on ANED country reports). This is a huge impact of the SEN programme on the Czech Community. Perhaps that explains why the Department and for that matter the University is involved in the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr SEN programme as one of the partner institutions of the consortium. It is clear indication that the contribution of the Department as far as SEN is concerned is remarkable and commendable.

5.4 Discussion and Evaluation on how the SEN degree programme is promoting inclusion in the Czech Republic.

It was portrayed in the literature review that special education delivery began in hospices and asylums. Then it continued into residential institutions and came to integration and to mainstreaming. Today, we use terminologies like special educational needs and inclusion to denote educational service delivery models available to learners with disabilities. This concept of inclusion is a global catchword which every country is aiming to achieve. The world bodies such as the United Nations and the World Bank all endorse inclusion. However, as an educational construct, it is subject to various interpretations by different nations and people. The redeeming fact is that despite some teething difficulties in the application of the term, it is generally accepted that the concept aims to make basic education accessible and on equal and appropriate footing to everybody everywhere. UNESCO (2005) advanced some guidelines on inclusion. Booth and Ainscow(2002) also advanced "the index of inclusion" as guiding principles to facilitate the implementation of the concept. In the literature, I stated that I would use special education needs and inclusion in preference to integration and mainstreaming and quoted Uditsky (1993) who explained inclusion to be "situations in which a student with disability is embedded within the normative education pathways within the classroom and school with the class teacher being responsible for the children's learning" (p. 8).

On how the SEN programme has been promoting inclusion in the Czech Republic, the interviewees explained that quite a number of plans are underway by various stakeholders in education including the Czech government. The interviewees portrayed that modules on inclusion were taught the students and many practical initiatives are also put in place.

For instance, there are disability groups of the blind, the deaf and the physically challenged who speak for themselves and challenge people who infringe on their rights. The basic question is who speaks for the mentally retarded and the intellectual disabled? Some disabled organisations have realised the need to fight a common battle and form a strong force to be reckoned with. All stakeholders are being brought on board and the political will is strong as the government is supportive of plans and projects concerning inclusion such as the National Action Plan for Inclusion.

5.5 Summary

In this section, I presented the evaluation of the findings of the study through the discussion method. I analysed the SEN degree programme of the Department of Special Education at Charles University by interviewing some lecturers and other officials who provided me with in-depth understanding and knowledge of the programme in addition to what I gathered from documentary sources. I also added information from the students' perspectives regarding their views on the SEN degree programme. On the whole, the evaluation shows that the SEN programme is on course as contained in the statute books and as expected from all stakeholders both nationally and internationally notwithstanding a few "misgivings" expressed by some students regarding the practicum component.

In the last chapter, the main conclusions and recommendations are presented. I consider them as food for thought and futuristic study considerations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this final phase of my analytic study, I present a summary of the preceding five chapters of the dissertation. In the first chapter, 1 introduced the topic for investigation. This was followed by the review of the relevant literature. The third chapter put the work in its methodological perspective by outlining the data gathering process while in the fourth one, I presented and analysed the data. In the fifth chapter the data was discussed and evaluated. All these have been summarised into the current chapter which concludes the study.

The aim of the dissertation was to analyse the special education needs (SEN) degree programme in the Department of Special Education at Charles University, Prague to get an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how teachers for children with special education needs are prepared - that is, the teacher education concept and how it is promoting inclusive education in the Czech Republic. By so doing, I trawled archival and legal documents on education in the country and gained more insight into the Czech education system which is going to enhance my work as a teacher educator back in my home country Ghana.

Beside the information from the legal documents, 1 employed semi-structured interview and questionnaire in order to obtain pertinent data for the study. With these instruments, my small-scale case study was focused and the data gathering process started in earnest. The interview process was in two phases, one for the lecturers and the other for an

official from the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports and a set of questionnaire for final year students in the Department of Special Education.

The findings have brought up interesting issues for consideration by all concerned parties in teacher education and special education needs in **the Czech Republic, The conclusions** have been classified into headings as a consequence of the deliberations that emerged from the investigation. They include (a) lecturers' analysis of the SEN degree programme **(b)** students' analysis of the SEN degree programme (c) Impact of SEN degree programme on Czech Republic Community (d) Promotion of Inclusion by SEN programme in Czech Republic (e) Recommendations.

6.2 Lecturers analysis of the SEN degree programme

The lecturers described the SEN degree programme as a course of study meant to educate students and other professionals in the field of disabilities who have interest in special educational needs. All lecturers agreed that it is not for teachers alone; therefore, students who are non-teachers also enroll and receive university education to function in their respective careers as NGO managers or school and office administrators. With respect to the content of the programme, it was revealed that the SEN programme is lopsided. The theory aspect outweighed the practicum. The lecturers estimated that the theory could be between 70% to 80% and the practicum or teaching practice also between 20% to 30%. This is acceptable given the breakdown of the various aspects of the theory to comprise general education courses, subject area courses, liberal arts courses, science courses and information communication technology. Thus, the programme was described by the lecturers as adequate and balanced.

6.3 Students' analysis of the SEN degree programme

The students also acknowledged the fact that the SEN degree programme is meant for both students wishing to become teachers and other professionals. They indicated that some of them were working in responsible positions before they enrolled on the SEN degree programme; and it is likely that they would go back to their former places of work or join other remunerative jobs. On the content of the programme, six students constituting 40% described it as "inadequate or imbalance" because of the seemingly small practical component, meanwhile the rest of them(60%) concluded that there was nothing wrong with it." They explained: "The programme is good without any difficulties".

6.4 Impact of SEN programme on Czech Community

The lecturers were emphatic that every year their students undertake teaching practice in the community schools even before they qualify to become professional practitioners. On completion, u number of the students join the teaching profession us newly qualified teachers to offer invaluable services to the Czech Community and so the contribution of the SEN degree programme to the Czech Community is very huge. And again, the other students from other faculties and departments who register for special education modules in the Department including the Department's main students are taught how to identify children with special needs in the community for purposes of early intervention. In this regard, it can be asserted that the SEN degree programme is obviously impacting positively on the Czech Community. The official from the Ministry of Education made a similar supportive statement as she declared: "We complement each other; our activities

and their study programme move in line so there is great influence on the community. And don't forget I told you that I am an old student of the Department who is now working on this National Action Plan for Inclusion for the whole country". This is another impact of the SEN degree programme on the Czech Community. Finally, it is on record that the custodians of the SEN degree programme who are the lecturers from the Department are engaged on national and international projects where they use their expertise to work for the betterment of the Czech Republic and that is a great achievement the Special Education Needs Department, Faculty of Education and Charles University as a whole.

6.5 Promotion of inclusion by the SEN degree programme in Czech Republic.

From the interview, it was evident that the Czech Republic is preparing for large scale implementation of inclusion in the whole country in the near future. What remains uncertain is the date of implementation. However, one thing is clear and that is the consensus for a gradual take-off. All the stakeholders appear to agree that the concept is worth implementing and that it is a gradual process which should not be done radically or on ad hoc basis. There is no point in closing down all special schools. After all, there may be isolated cases or extreme cases whereby pupils with profound cases cannot attend inclusive schools and will have to be educated in special schools for intensive support. Again, from the lecturers' interview there is ample evidence that with the admission and accommodation of students with special needs on the programme, the SEN degree programme is promoting inclusion even at the university level.

6.6 Recommendations

From the conclusions arrived at so far, it is now abundantly clear that the special educational needs (SEN) degree programme of the Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague is a versatile programme whose main objective is to educate students and allied professionals interested in special education needs to the highest level in order that excellent services will be rendered to persons with disabilities in the Czech Republic.

Even though the SEN programme is not entirely teacher education focused, it has proved beyond doubts that it has all the human and material resources required to prepare competent graduate teachers capable of teaching individuals with special needs as well as all others who can help push the inclusion agenda forward. At this point, 1 wish to conclude that the institutional context, the content, duration and the practical experiences of the SEN degree programme have resulted in good university-community partnership and that the teacher education aspect of the programme has the trust and confidence of the people. Since the success of inclusion depends to a great extent on teachers, the teacher education can be improved to attract more youth into the teaching profession.

In future, the Department can expand its SEN programme to embrace all categories of special needs individuals such as those with dyslexia, cerebral palsy, autism and even adults and the aged.

Finally, like the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr SEN programme, the Department needs to attract more international programmes and exchanges for both students and lecturers. As a regular source of income generating venture, the Department can also embark on holiday classes for parents and other workers to introduce them to aspects of special

education especially identification and early intervention practices. Summer schools can also be organised for local and international participants on Inclusion which may be quite different from the Department's current Distance Education Programme.

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APPENDICES

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Erasmus Mundus Program 2009/2010

APPENDIX A	LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
APPENDIX B	INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LECTURERS
APPENDIX C	INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OFFICIAL
APPENDIX D	QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FINAL YEAR STUDENTS
APPENDIX E	LECTURERS' INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION
APPENDIX F	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OFFICIAL'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

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Mer. H vu Vuchudovti, Ph.D.
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APPENDIX B

Roehampton

Erasmus Mundus Program 2009/2010

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LECTURERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, UNIVERZITA KARLOVA v PRAZE

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am an international student on the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr SEN programme in this University. For my thesis, I am researching on the topic: **An analysis of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Degree programme of the Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague.** The rationale for this study is to find out the extent to which the SEN degree programme is promoting inclusive education in the Czech Republic.

Could you please spare some few minutes to answer the following questions as concisely as possible to help me complete my study. Be assured that the information you provide will be used purposely to generate data for this research work and nothing else. I therefore guarantee you complete anonymity and confidentiality in this exercise. Do you mind if I tape record the responses for purposes of convenience? Thank you for your cooperation,

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Dogbe.

1. What are the objectives of your Special Educational Needs (SEN) degree programme *? Is it to train teachers for all special and mainstream schools in Czech? Or to educate graduates interested in SEN no matter where they will work after university?*
2. How would you evaluate your SEN training programme in terms of academic, didactic and pedagogic aspects? *Very adequate, Adequate, Inadequate. Why?*
3. Kindly describe the theoretical *(content)* and *practical aspect* of your special education needs degree programme briefly but accurately. *For example, 50% for content and 50% for practical work or 70% and 30% etc.; in your opinion, is it one-sided or balanced?*

4. What is the government's policy on the training of teachers for special education needs children in the Czech Republic? *For example, two- track approach, special school and mainstream or inclusive education.*

5. As a lecturer in SEN, to what extent do you think that inclusive education is practicable in the Czech Republic?
6. How long is the teaching practice in special schools or in mainstream schools for your students? And how do you evaluate their performance during the teaching practice period? *Every lecturer is involved; only some lecturers are involved; or mentors in the various schools assist in the evaluation.*
7. How can the training of teachers for SEN children be improved in the Czech Republic?
8. In what ways do you collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare, Teachers and Disabled People's Organizations(DPOs) to promote inclusive education in the country?
9. How would you like the government to support the Department so that you can perform your duty effectively?

10. How many students with SEN are in Charles University and what provisions are in place for them? *(for academic and social inclusion in the system).*

APPENDIX B

Roehampton

Erasmus Mundus Program 2009/2010

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR OFFICIAL FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS, PRAGUE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am an international student on the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr SEN programme in Charles University **in** Prague. For my thesis, I am researching on the topic: **An analysis of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Degree programme of the Special Education Department at Charles University in Prague.** The rationale for this study is to gain a deep understanding into how teachers **of learners** with special needs are educated in the Czech Republic and to find out how the programme is promoting inclusive education in the country .

Could you please briefly answer the following questions as concisely as possible to help me complete my study. Be assured that the information you provide will be used purposely to generate data for this research work and nothing else. I therefore guarantee you complete anonymity and confidentiality in this exercise. Do you mind if I tape record the responses for purposes of convenience? Thank you for your cooperation,

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Dogbe.

1. Can you please tell me about the Government's policy on inclusion?
2. What is the Government's position on special education teacher preparation?
3. What help does the Government offer the Department of Special Education in Charles University?

APPENDIX B

Roehampton

Special Onderwijaor UniVGrS ity

Erasmus Mundus Program 2009/2010

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FINAL YEAR (SEN) STUDENTS FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Dear Respondent,

I am an international student pursuing the MA/Mgr SEN programme at the Univerzita Karlova v Praze. I am conducting a research for my thesis and I implore you to provide me with some information relating to my topic: **An analysis of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Degree programme of the Department of Special Education at Charles University in Prague.**

I appreciate your help and time in providing me with vital information which will only be used for this research work. I assure you of anonymity and confidentiality of every information provided. Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Dogbe

Directions: Please tick (V) where appropriate and provide short and concise responses for the open-ended questions.

1. Gender: male ( ) female ( )
2. Why do you want to teach or work with Special education needs (SEN) children?
3. Do you find the SEN programme adequate in content? Yes ( ) No ( ). Please explain.
4. Give only two (2) reasons why you are interested in the teaching practice aspect of your programme
5. Which categories of SEN children do you focus on in your programme? Blind, Deaf, Intellectually Disabled, etc.
6. Underline the category of SEN children you are specialising to work with.

7. Do you encounter any specific difficulties in your studies regarding the SEN programme? Yes ( ) No ( ) Briefly explain.
8. Where would you prefer to work after university? Special school ( ) Mainstream school ( )
9. Give only two questions for your answer to question 8.
10. For how long have you learnt the following? (a) braille (b) sign language (c) diagnostic teaching
11. What changes do you expect should be done to improve upon your SEN degree programme? (What should be added or deleted from the programme)
12. Where were you teaching or working before you came on the SEN programme?
13. From your teaching practice experience, do you think that the SEN children can perform very well in the national examinations and proceed to the university? Yes ( ) No ( )
14. Explain your answer to question 13
15. In your view, should every student in Univerzita Karlova v Praze learn or know something about SEN? Yes ( ) No ( ).
16. Explain your answer to question 15.
17. Apart from Teaching Practice, how often do you visit special institutions for the handicapped? (a) Frequently (b) Once a while (c)Not at all
18. Write down the names of three (3) institutions for the special needs learners that you have visited since you enrolled on this programme.
19. Which category of special needs children in your view are the most marginalised in the country and why?
20. What two(2) strong points will you give the Minister for Education or the Government to improve upon the situation of persons with disability in the Czech Republic?

APPENDIX B

Roehampton

Erasmus Mundus Program 2009/2010

Lecturers' transcribed interview

Question 1

What are the objectives of your Special Educational Needs (SEN) degree programme?

Lecturer A: "It is to educate students interested in special education needs for various types of degrees ; it can be bachelor's, master's, or doctorate. After that they can decide to teach in nursery, primary or secondary school in the mainstream or special school or work wherever they wish. They are not obliged to be necessarily teachers. Some of them work in non-governmental organizations and others in offices as administrators".

Lecturer B: "Oh you mean the teacher education programme? Okay. We educate our students to work in all primary and secondary schools in the country after completing the programme. It is therefore a programme of study at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level."

Lecturer C: "The objective is to educate specialists in the field of disability education, not only teachers. For example, some do not teach but they prepare projects for children out of school. They have some qualification but they do not teach subjects. Their duty is to work on out-of-school projects and materials. A second objective is to inform other students in the university of all the subjects; for example, kindergarten, basic school and gradually move towards inclusive education. These are organised through short informative courses for about a semester of 60 hours. Other students also come and take courses in special education and so you see the Department has a special role to serve everybody.

Question 2

How would you evaluate your SEN degree programme in terms of academic, didactic and pedagogic aspects?

Lecturer A: It is adequate because it is well-balanced; for instance, I am a specialist in visual impairment and we teach our students courses on ophthalmology with psychology and psychological development in addition to practicum. And in my area for example, the students are not many so we have ample time to train them in orientation and mobility,

braille reading and writing and other clinical practices. The same goes for the other areas also.

Lecturer B: The programme is adequate. There is a combination of special education and teaching subject or counselling or psychology. It is not only special education but special education and something else.

Lecturer C: In terms of academic, we are involved in a number of research activities and for the didactic we educate the students as to how to impart knowledge to their pupils and regarding the pedagogic aspect, students are taken through the methods of teaching the various subjects to the pupils. The focus is more on the academic but for those studying to become teachers, we emphasise more on the practical aspect for them because that is an area that teachers are found wanting. As a result, the University and for that matter the Department co-operates with schools in the community so that the students have the opportunity to work in the schools under the teachers as mentors; but it needs more financing in view of a few problems that have been identified.

Question 3:

Kindly describe the theoretical (content) and the practical aspect of your special needs degree programme briefly but accurately.

Lecturer A: The programme is more theoretical than practical; the theory is about 70% and the practical aspect is also about 30%. After the practicum, we educate them to reflect on the practice and to look out for topical issues in the field of disability in the communities.

Lecturer B: It is both theory and practicum. The emphasis is on theory but the practical aspect is also alright. Usually that is for those in methodology.

Lecturer C: The SEN programme can be said to be composed of 80% theory and 20% practical activities; usually, if the number of students is large for instance, around 120, practically, you adopt co-operative learning strategy since there may not be enough space for many students, you can ask them to do some practical work such as instructing them to visit the community to interact with persons with disabilities and experience their living and find out more about them and come to present a report. Such an activity can be in the home, cinema or workplace. An activity like this can be done after classes and there must be evidence that it was done and done well. Some students' first encounter with adults with disabilities have established long lasting cordial relationships with these individuals ever since.

Question 4:

What is the Czech Government's policy on teacher education for special needs children in the country?

Lecturer A: The government's policy on teacher education for special needs children is good. It is not different from teacher education for primary and secondary schools. Even now, other teachers are also obliged to know something about special education. So the government supports special education teacher preparation for mainstream and special schools.

Lecturer B: Well you need to understand that universities are to some extent autonomous and so every university with faculty of education draws its own programmes. I cannot generalise to embrace all other universities in the country but at least our university draws its SEN programmes in line with the government's working group on the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education and I have no doubt that teacher education is one of the areas of concern. Some of our students practice in mainstream schools and other students from different faculties and departments come to take special education courses from our department. This is aimed at creating awareness and sensitisation.

Lecturer C: I will say that the government supports teacher education because there are good laws concerning education, social affairs, accessibility and employment which give the disabled more privileges than before. With the laws and legislations things seem okay but practically, there are bottlenecks which I will say can be solved if the government officials are committed.

Question 5:

As a lecturer in SEN, to what extent do you think that inclusive education is practicable in the Czech Republic?

Lecturer A: Inclusive education is a process. It is developing gradually in many countries. Learners with dyslexia, physical disabilities and emotional and behaviour disorders are integrated in some mainstream schools. It takes time but we are preparing hard for it as a nation.

Lecturer B: Inclusion is a gradual process and many people do not quite understand what is involved. They think that with inclusion special schools will be closed down. In this country, it can be said that, there is inadequate preparation on the part of mainstream teachers and that is attitudinal. The barriers to the concept reside in people. Another barrier is that special education teachers are also afraid of losing their jobs. I understand that inclusion brings about diversity so people have choice or choices. For that matter, I don't like inclusive extremism where people try to impose their ideas on others.

Lecturer C: Inclusion is theoretically practicable but to some extent. For some children it is okay but it cannot suit all children. All schools cannot be changed into inclusive schools. In the Czech Republic, to put a child into an inclusive setting, there is need to assess or evaluate

the needs of the child. First what are the child's needs? Second, parents must be involved in the decision making process. If some conditions are not favourable in the mainstream school, and there appear to be better conditions in the special schools where there are less children, better facilities and opportunities for socialisation which will benefit the child, the choice of a special school can take precedence over a mainstream school.

Question 6

How long is the teaching practice in special ***schools*** *or* ***in mainstream schools for your students?*** *And how do you evaluate their performance during the teaching practice period?*

Lecturer A: The teaching practice is for one semester with specified number of hours usually 20 hours for the degree programme followed by reflective report writing. And only one lecturer is in charge of the teaching practice.

Lecturer B: Normally, our teaching practice is for a semester with some specific number of hours. After the practicum, the students are made to present a reflective report. The methodology lecturers coordinate and evaluate teaching practice. Perhaps in future, we can use the distance education students to improve upon this area because they are more than the regular students.

Lecturer C: The duration differs from course to course. It is usually handled by lecturers who teach methods. There are also mentors in the schools but they are not enough and it calls for some sort of training of more mentors.

Question 7

How can teacher education for SEN children be improved in the Czech Republic?

Lecturer A: There are many issues to consider so it is difficult to focus on one particular thing for improvement. However, if we know the needs of the students or the needs of the schools we can change accordingly. So to improve upon the teacher education programme will depend on these two factors - students' needs and needs of the schools.

Lecturer B: It can be done through change in attitude towards individuals with disabilities. And it involves everybody. You know, there is some sort of disability in every family. Change in attitude should be from the homes, community, workplace, school in fact every- where. We are all included. I think Charles University is showing good example to the public.

Lecturer C: There is need for more special teachers. It will be better to focus more on the whole life of individuals with disabilities. That way we can cater broadly for all persons with disabilities from kindergarten to the adults including the aged. We should also focus on the profound categories and not only the educables.

Question 8

In what ways do you collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Social Affairs, Teachers and Disabled People's organizations (DPOs) to promote inclusive education in the country?

Lecturer A: Yes, there is co-operation and collaboration among the lecturers and the various agencies and ministries. Individual lecturers are invited to work with officials from the ministries on government projects. Our lecturers and students sometimes exchange talks with experts in the field working with NGOs serving the disabled.

Lecturer B: Yes, there is co-operation and collaboration among the lecturers and the various agencies and ministries. Individual lecturers are invited to work with officials and the ministries on government projects. For example as we speak now, the Head of Department is assisting the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to work on the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education. Our lecturers and students from time to time exchange talks or have seminars on disability issues with experts in the field. Usually these are in the areas of counselling and early intervention. All these are geared towards inclusion and in particular social inclusion.

Lecturer C: There is co-operation and collaboration among lecturers and the government directly or indirectly. Lecturers depending on their areas of specialisations, interest and affiliation with agencies do research activities or consultancy work for the agencies. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also work with us. Some of them invite our university lecturers to special groups formed by the ministries to help prepare legislation or evaluate their projects.

Question 9

How would you like the government to support the Department so that you can perform your duty effectively?

Lecturer A: This is obvious. We need money and facilities and support in all our activities.

Lecturer B: Of course there must be understanding and support from the government. We need to work together not in isolation. We are partners in development.

Lecturer C: There is the need for networking. Lecturers have the expertise and government has the money.

Question 10

How many students with SEN are in Charles University and what provisions are in place for them?

Lecturer A: I do not know the exact figure. That is a rather difficult one. I will find out and let you know as soon as possible. The University tries to provide teaching and learning materials for all SEN students. Accommodation is also made for their social interaction. For example wheelchair users have lifts and ramps and escalators; the blind have their facilities as well as the deaf.

Thank you very much for the information and your time. I am very grateful to you.

Lecturer B: I do not know the figure right away but in one of my research papers which I conducted in 2005/2006 academic year for presentation to students from Minnesota University; it was revealed that there are about 140 students with SEN in Charles University. I will look for that paper and forward it to you in your mail. And the provisions for them are also indicated in the research paper.

Thank you very much. I am most grateful to you for the invaluable information provide as well as your time. Thank you again.

Lecturer C: I do not know the number of student with SEN that are currently in the university system. However, I presume that you should be able to get the right answer from the Head of Department. This is rather statistical.

Thank you so much for the rich information and for your time. I am very grateful to you.

APPENDIX B

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Erasmus Mundus Program 2009/2010

Ministry of Education Official's Transcribed Interview

Question 1

Can you please tell me about the government's policy on inclusion?

Our national activities and for that matter, our position on inclusion is very clear. We support inclusion and the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MEYS) prepared a working document on the concept of inclusion which was accepted by the Government. It is known as the National Action Plan for Inclusion. It is a roadmap on how the Government will finance the implementation of inclusive education in the Czech Republic. The first plan is in two phases and this will be piloted in three years and the results submitted to the Government again to look at the critical areas such as finance, teacher education and other changes that may have to be made in the general education system. This will be a gradual process, not radical. People should understand that all special schools cannot be closed down. There are smaller number of children with problematic psychiatric and other disorders so special schools will not be closed. Such children will definitely need intensive support. Each individual child has to be considered as a unique individual. For instance, the deaf children must be taught their mother tongue which is "sign language" first before they are introduced to another language. In Europe, some countries are adopting the radical approach to inclusion but even though I am a supporter of inclusion, I think we need to go gradually. The system must be ready before we take off on a large scale nationwide.

Question 2

What is the Government's position on special education teacher preparation?

That is also part of the National Action Plan. Intensive communication has started with the various faculties and departments of education. Formerly, special education teachers were separated from the mainstream teachers and even their training was made up of few subjects. Now, there is need for in-depth content for both the special education and all other teachers. There need to be cooperation between special education teachers and other teachers. They have to exchange ideas and experiences in the areas of methodology, counselling and resource services. The Ministry is not working in isolation so we collaborate

with the universities and other agencies such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving the disabled to work on the National Action Plan.

Question 3

What help does the Government offer the Department of Special Education in Charles University?

The Government helps the various Departments in the areas of research, networking and hiring of experts, specialists or consultants from within the faculties and Departments to do projects such as the National Action Plan that we have just discussed.