

Dissertation marking and feedback sheet

Programme: Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr. in Special and Inclusive Education

Module: Dissertation

Module code: ERM030L003S

Student Name: Salesh Sachin Deo

Student Number:

1st Marker's name: Mgr. Marie Komorná

Title of dissertation: Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in Mainstream Primary Schools in Fiji.

Use (i.e. exploration and discussion) of literature/evidence:

In recent years inclusive education has become the leading philosophy in education systems worldwide. The submitted thesis looks at inclusive education of students with special needs in Fiji, specifically from the point of view of teachers in mainstream schools.

The list of literature relevant to the topic as listed in Chapter 3 provides a solid theoretical basis for the implementation of the research survey. The author presents the concept and history of inclusive education for students with special needs (SSN). The author also concentrates on the advantages of inclusive education and the concerns and limitations which it brings. Since there is no literature available on this subject by experts in Fiji, the author primarily based the content of this chapter on foreign materials.

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

The author selected the research subject based on studied academic literature. He chose to tackle this topic using a qualitative survey, specifically through the analysis of responses of respondents obtained by means of a semi-structured interview. The selected methodology and its advantages and limitations are clearly described in the thesis. The questionnaire for the semi-structured interview is well thought-through and logically put together – each of the main research questions is followed by between 6 and 8 related questions. A list of the main questions and the related questions is attached. Also included is detailed information about the respondents (age, sex, education, experience teaching special needs students etc.). Prior to implementing the actual research the author conducted a pilot study. The main part of the thesis consists of an analysis of the responses of eight teachers from four mainstream schools in the Nausori district of Fiji. The obtained responses were sorted and divided into categories. Based on a detailed analysis of

the responses the author then outlines and clearly, in detail presents the main topics which are relevant to inclusion of students with SN from the point of view of teachers. The conclusions drawn from the research survey are then correlated with the findings obtained from the studied academic literature.

Structure, communication, and presentation:

The thesis is well-structured; its individual sections build on one another. The research survey, its goals and the method of data processing and analysis and interpretation thereof are presented in a clear and coherent manner. There are certain slight semantic and stylistic shortcomings in some parts of the thesis, however the thesis is of a good standard overall.

Overall comments (including any areas for further improvement):

The author selected a topical subject for the thesis and primarily focused on teachers – the key stakeholders in inclusive education. I appreciate the active, independent and systematic approach used by the author both when conducting the research survey and when processing the relevant literature, analysis and interpretation of the obtained data. I believe that the content demonstrates both thorough knowledge of the examined issues and a deep interest therein.

Given the small sample of respondents, the data obtained through the research cannot be generalized (the author himself points this out and suggests that other respondents be included in the research as well as expanding the research to include other schools and districts in Fiji; I believe that it would also be suitable to include teachers from special schools in the research).

Nonetheless I see Salesh's work as beneficial. One can say that he successfully demonstrated not only the perceptions of teachers in mainstream schools regarding inclusive education of students with special needs, but also the advantages and limitations which inclusion brings. The thesis is also valuable in that it shows those aspects which need to be focused on when implementing the inclusive concept of education. The presented findings can be applied not only to inclusive education in Fiji, but also to other countries within an international context.

I have one small comment regarding the thesis: the content of Chapter 4.3.4 (p. 35 and 36) is identical to the content of Chapter 4.3.3. As part of the defense of the thesis please summarize the facts which relate to the topic of the Chapter.

2nd Marker's Name: Leda Kamenopoulou

2nd Marker's Comments: Salesh, this is a very well written piece of research that demonstrates a solid understanding of key theoretical issues in relation to your chosen topic. The structure is clear and there is a detailed description of the methodology, findings and discussion. A wide range of literature is used with evidence of critical analysis. Area for improvement: The dissertation could be further improved by providing additional information on key research studies that are mentioned in the literature review and discussion, e.g., location (in which country was the research carried out?), methodology (what/how was data collected?). I greatly enjoyed reading this work!

Well done!

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