

Original Paper

Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy for Disabled Children in Primary Schools in Vietnam

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Abstract

Implementing inclusive education (IE) for children with disabilities (CWD) in primary schools is one of the essential roles of school manager to provide equal opportunities in learning and development for CDW. This paper is concerned with exploring IE implementation in primary schools in Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam. IE management such as making plans, organising activities, directing, and assessing discussed related to effective implementation of IE policy in these schools indicates that IE management although is not being satisfactorily implemented in schools. The results of the study will be the bases for proposing more effective measures to manage inclusive education in primary schools in Vietnam.

Keywords

inclusive education, public policy, Vietnam, primary school, disabilities

1. Introduction

The Education for All (EFA) initiative, first put forth in 1990 by the international community, marked a global movement toward providing quality basic education to all children, youth and adults (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Peters, 2007). However, the majority of children with disabilities (CWD) in developing countries including Vietnam are currently out of school, while many of those enrolled are not learning. Removing barriers to accessing education and to learning for persons with disabilities are prerequisites for the realization of EFA. Successful implementation of IE could increase the number of those with disabilities receiving educational and other services in many Vietnamese schools.

The Law on Persons with Disabilities 2010 defines people with disabilities as follows: “*Persons with disabilities by definition of this Law are those who have impairment of one or more parts of their body, or functional impairment, which are shown in different forms of disability, and may cause difficulties in*

work, daily life and learning” (Phan, 2017). To ensure that all children have access to quality education, education policies and practices must be inclusive of all learners, encourage the full participation of all, and promote diversity as a resource, rather than as an obstacle. Inclusive education for all will pave the way to prosperity for individuals and society, at large.

The history of services for students with disabilities in Vietnam started from the French colonial government established the first school for Vietnamese students who were deaf in 1886. When the Vietnam-American War ended and the country was reunified, the Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act was enacted by the U.S. Congress, and Vietnam initiated the construction of a special separate school system for students with disabilities. The seeds of inclusive education in Vietnam were sown nearly 30 years ago. By 1991, Vietnam had established 36 special schools throughout the country, which served 6 000 students with disabilities. At that time, Vietnam was the first country in Asia to ratify the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that same year, Vietnam enacted legislation in keeping with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that required compulsory primary education and enacted the second piece of legislation that dealt with the protection and care for children. The Law of Protection and Care for Children addressed the reintegration of students with disabilities into society, the availability of special schools, and the provision of rehabilitative services. In 1992, a new constitution was ratified that emphasized appropriate vocational training for children with disabilities. Despite the supportive national legislation and constitutional changes, in practice, the early identification of children with disabilities, provision of parental support, and student inclusion in preschool, primary, or secondary schools were rare. Vietnamese children with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, vision and hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, learning disabilities, autism, multiple disabilities, and disabilities resulting from Agent Orange syndrome, disease, and congenital conditions had limited access to any schooling. Traditionally, children with disabilities were cared for by their families, who often viewed the children as burdens to society or sources of shame and pity.

Different surveys provide different figures, and the lack of accurate data is a common issue in the country. For example, the 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census used a set of questions based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) framework. By this standard, the Census found that 7.3% of Vietnamese have impairment in one or more of the following areas: vision, hearing, mobility, and cognition (Le, 2013). According to the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 1.3 million people with disabilities are children between the age of 5 and 18 (Le, 2013). Physical disabilities, mental disabilities and hearing impairments are the three most common groups.

The Ministry of Education and Training has determined that inclusive education is the main direction to ensure equality and fairness in education for children with disabilities to achieve the goal: *“Developing one’s abilities, being in harmony with each other. Enter and increase opportunities to contribute to the community; ensure the right to education of equal quality, quality and suitable to the*

characteristics and abilities of people with disabilities” (Le & Nguyen, 2019).

Managing inclusive education activities for CWD studying at primary school is essential to achieving the goal. Recently, the number of CWD participating IE has increased rapidly with many different types and degrees of disability. And the management of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Hanoi has faced many difficulties. This paper aims to understand inclusive education (IE) implementation in primary schools in Hanoi, Vietnam.

2. Method

The study was conducted at 7/11 primary schools in Cau Giay district, Hanoi, Vietnam to explore implementing inclusive education for CWD. The study lasted from March 2021. The questionnaire is designed for 3 groups of participants including 19 educational managers, 54 classroom teachers and 52 parents of children with disabilities. Mixed methods are used as questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews and operational product research to collect data. For the questions, we used a 5-level Likert scale 5-point Likert scale (poor, fair, good, very good, and excellent). The mean value for each for is calculated between the rating levels. With this scale, it is possible to indicate the following ratings: 1,0-1,80: *Poor*; from 1,81-2,60: *Fair*; 2,61-3,40: *Good*; 3,41-4,20 points: *Very Good*; 4,21-5,0: *Excellent*.

3. Result

3.1 Making Inclusion Plans for Children with Disabilities in Schools

Table 1 shows that the planning of inclusive education activities for CWD in primary schools was “*very good*” with an average of 3.47. There are four items rated “*very good*”; one item was “*good*” and 1 content is “*fair*”. With the same average score of 4.03, content “*Making plans to accept children with disabilities learning inclusion*” and “*Making plans for the implementation of knowledge-based educational content; social skills; health care, rehabilitation*” was evaluated as performing better than other kinds of plans in schools.

The content “*Making plans to explore the abilities and needs of CWD in inclusive learning*” was assessed at the level of “*fair*” (M=2.44); However, the SD of 0.88 is quite high, indicating that there is a difference in the level of performance across the schools staff. In terms of percentage, 13.7% of participants rated that this item “*Very Good*”; 23.3% rated it as “*Fair*” and 46.6% rated this content as “*Good*” and the remaining 16.4% as “*Excellent*”. This is an important management activity to help develop individual educational goals for each CWD, but the survey results show that a large percentage of schools are still not interested in implementing it.

To clarify the planning work, when conducting interviews with 7 administrators with specific questions: “*Can you tell about planning educational activities for CWD in your school?*”, 6/7 participants told that “*The school does not have a separate plan for inclusive education activities for CWD; this activity is just a content in the school's school year plan, then the department performs any task, that department*

makes a plan to organize the implementation"; 3/7 commented that: *"Some planning contents are not necessary, just need to be well organized"*; 5/7 managers could not fully and accurately state the objectives of managing inclusive education activities for CWD.

Table 1. Response on Making Inclusive Education Plans for Students with Disabilities

Items/Content	Mean (SD)
Making plans to enroll CWS learning inclusion	4.03 (0.52)
Making plans to explore the abilities and needs of CWD in inclusive learning	2.44 (0.88)
Creating a goal-setting plan, make an individual education plan	2.79 (0.48)
Making plans for the implementation of knowledge-based educational content; social skills; health care, rehabilitation	4.06 (0.57)
Making plans to test and evaluate the results of Inclusive Education for children with Disabilities	4.01 (0.55)

Table 1 demonstrated that the planning of inclusive education activities for children with disabilities in primary schools in District 7 is done at "good" with an average of 3.47. There are 4 content rated "very good"; 1 content is rated "good" and 1 content is "fair". With the same average score of 4.05, content *"Making plans to enroll CWS learning inclusion"* and *"Making plans for the implementation of knowledge-based educational content; social skills; health care, rehabilitation"* was evaluated as performing better than other plans.

The content *"Making plans to explore the abilities and needs of CWD in inclusive learning"* is assessed at the level of "fair" with an average of 2.44; However, the SD of 0.88 is quite high, indicating that there is a difference in the level of performance across the schools. In terms of percentage, 13.7% of comments rate this content as "good"; 23.3% rated it as "fair", 46.6% rated this content as "good" and the remaining 16.4% as "very good". This is an important management activity to help develop individual educational goals for each child, but the survey results show that a large percentage of schools are still not interested in implementing it.

To clarify the planning work, when conducting interviews with 7 administrators with specific questions: *"Teacher, tell me about planning educational activities for children with disabilities in your school. Ms) how is it done?"*, 6/7 commented: *"The school does not have a separate plan for inclusive education activities for children with disabilities; this activity is just a content in the school's school year plan, then the department performs any task, that department makes a plan to organize the implementation"*; 3/7 commented that: *"Some planning contents are not necessary, just need to be well organized"*; 5/7 managers could not fully and accurately state the objectives of managing inclusive education activities

for children with disabilities.

3.2 The Prevalence of Organizing Inclusive Education Activities for Children with Disabilities

Table 2. Response to Organising Inclusive Education Activities

Items/Content	Mean (SD)
Assigning to receive records of children learning inclusion	4.59 (0.49)
Identifying the abilities and needs of the child's learning inclusion	3.34 (0.75)
Creating a goal-setting plan, make an individual education plan	3.92 (0.68)
Setting goals, making individual educational plans for each child with disabilities	3.95 (0.57)
Monitoring and evaluating the results of inclusive education for children with disabilities	4.34 (0.65)

Table 2 shows that the organization of inclusive education activities for children with disabilities is done quite well. All assigned content and organization achieved the level of “very good” or higher. “Assigning to receive records of children learning inclusion” is best done with a Mean of 4.59 and SD of 0.49. The survey results show that 41.1% of opinions rate this work at the level of “Good”; 58.9% of opinions rated it at the level of “very good”. This proves that the principal does a good job of assigning vice principals and academic staff to receive records of children with disabilities for inclusive learning, and evaluate and place classes for children with disabilities for inclusive learning.

The work “Monitoring and evaluating the results of inclusive education for children with disabilities” is also done relatively well with a Mean of 4.34; Through the organization records of the periodical examination for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years at 7 schools, we find that this is relatively well-organized content, the record is fully archived because it is associated with organizational activities. Test and evaluate students throughout the school, there is a specific and clear assignment in testing and evaluating children with disabilities.

The work “Creating a goal-setting plan, make an individual education plan” and “Creating a goal-setting plan, make an individual education plan, setting goals, making individual educational plans for each child with disabilities” are carried out at the level of “Good” equivalent to (Mean=3.92 and Mean=3.95 respectively). However, when studying the professional assignment records at the beginning of the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years in 7 schools, it was found that the assignment of homeroom teachers in the class without students with disabilities and the class with students with disabilities. Inclusive learning is the same, there is no clear definition of tasks and relationships between homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and individuals involved in the process of inclusive education for children with disabilities.

The activity “Identifying the abilities and needs of the child's learning inclusion” was carried out at the lowest level with an average score of 3.43; a rating of 5 and an SD of 0.76 indicates a disparity in the level of performance across schools on this activity. In the survey results only 6.8% rated this content at the level of “very good” but up to 50.6% of the comments rated the level of implementation at the level of “good-fair”. When conducting in-depth interviews with 7 homeroom teachers in 7 schools about the organization of identifying abilities and needs for children with disabilities, 4/7 homeroom teachers admitted that “*Teachers themselves have not been interested in determining the abilities and needs of children with disabilities because there is no implementation and assignment of tasks by the principal*”.

In general, organizing inclusive education activities for children with disabilities is carried out to a better extent than planning activities. However, through the actual situation of the survey, the principal should pay more attention to the activity. “Identifying the abilities and needs of the child's learning inclusion” because this is the basis for ensuring the quality of inclusive education for CWD in primary school.

3.3 Directing of Inclusive Education Management for Children with Disabilities in Schools

Table 3. Directing Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Primary Schools

Items/Content	Mean (SD)
Implementation orientation	3.88 (0.95)
Directing, instructing, training	3.24 (0.74)
Motivating and encouraging and motivating in the educational process for children with disabilities	3.43 (0.81)

Table 3 shows that the activity “*Orientation for implementation of inclusive education*” is carried out at the level of “very good” with 3.88 points; rank 1; The activity “*Directing, instructing and training teachers to educate about knowledge, social skills, and rehabilitation for children with disabilities*” is only rated at the level of “good” with an average of 3.24. This is the most important content but has the lowest score. When conducting in-depth interviews with 7 teachers in assessing the direction and motivation of principals in implementing inclusion for CWD, 4/7 of teachers admitted “Lack of instructions from superiors in implementing educational content on knowledge, social skills and rehabilitation for children with disabilities. We need more training to understand the educational knowledge for CWD according to different types of disabilities”. In addition, the teachers also said that “Inclusive education for children with disabilities is very difficult, but the regime is not enough, teachers need more encouragement from the principal to do their job well”. When conducting in-depth interviews with managers to find out about the causes of the above situation, the majority said that:

“The Department of Education lacks direction on the work of inclusive education, only general guidance is incorporated in the plan. The school year of the primary school team”. In addition, there are very few training sessions for managers and teachers. Although there are instructions for self-improvement, it is not effective. From 2015 to now, the quan Cau Giay Department of Education and Training has only organized two training sessions on “Teaching children with dyslexia” and “Activities to support children with special educational needs especially in preschool and primary schools”. The results of the in-depth interview also showed the work of directing and instructing on the implementation of dossiers for children with disabilities; in the development of individual educational goals and plans; in testing, assessment of the inclusion of CWD is done relatively well. It proves that the principal has clear specific regulations and guidelines in directing and guiding the implementation of the above contents. Thus, the work of directing inclusive education activities for CWD in primary schools is performed at a good level; However, principals need to pay more attention to directing and motivating teachers in implementing educational content on knowledge, social skills, and rehabilitation for children with disabilities, because this is a long process, throughout the school year.

3.4 Monitoring and Assessment of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Schools

Table 4 shows that the evaluation is carried out relatively evenly among the three contents with the level of “very good” or higher. With 4.28 points, “checking and evaluating an application for children with disabilities” is the work that is rated at the level of “very good”, the remaining contents are evaluated at the level of “very good”. The low score of all 3 items (0.53-0.70) shows that the test performance is relatively similar in primary schools in the district. To better understand the status of testing and evaluation, we conducted in-depth interviews with management staff and technology teachers in primary schools that have implemented inclusive education.

Table 4. Monitoring and Assessment of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Primary Schools

Items/Content	Mean (SD)
Checking the implementation of the dossier and application for CWD	4.28 (0.53)
Checking the implementation of inclusive educational content for children with disabilities	3.80 (0.70)
Checking results of inclusive education for children with disabilities	4.04 (0.58)

With the question “*How is the monitoring and assessment of the implementation of educational contents for children with disabilities at school conducted?*”, 7 out of 10 teachers responded that a year the principal inspects, signs and approves individual education plans with disabilities 4 times as prescribed; 3 out of 10 said that the principal only signs and approves the individual education plan book once a year at the end of the school year. Teachers are tested and evaluated through attending class hours, checking individual education plan books, and through periodic test results for disabilities. With the same survey question as above, the management staff said: “Checking and evaluating the individual education plan books of children with disabilities, combined with the children’s records to consider determining capacity and needs define the educational goals of the teachers. In addition, management staff also regularly check through discussions with teachers, children with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities; statistics to evaluate the quality of inclusive education in each term of the school year”. However, commenting on the post-inspection adjustment, 8/10 teachers said that: “There is no requirement to adjust, only sometimes the vice-principal gives general reminders in the group meeting”. The general average for the level of testing and evaluation of inclusive education activities for children with disabilities in primary schools in District 7 is 4.11, which is quite good. The examination and evaluation were based on the guiding documents on the work of inclusion for children with Disabilities, the examination process was carried out methodically and with full content; however, the principal needs to pay more attention to the implementation of post-inspection adjustments.

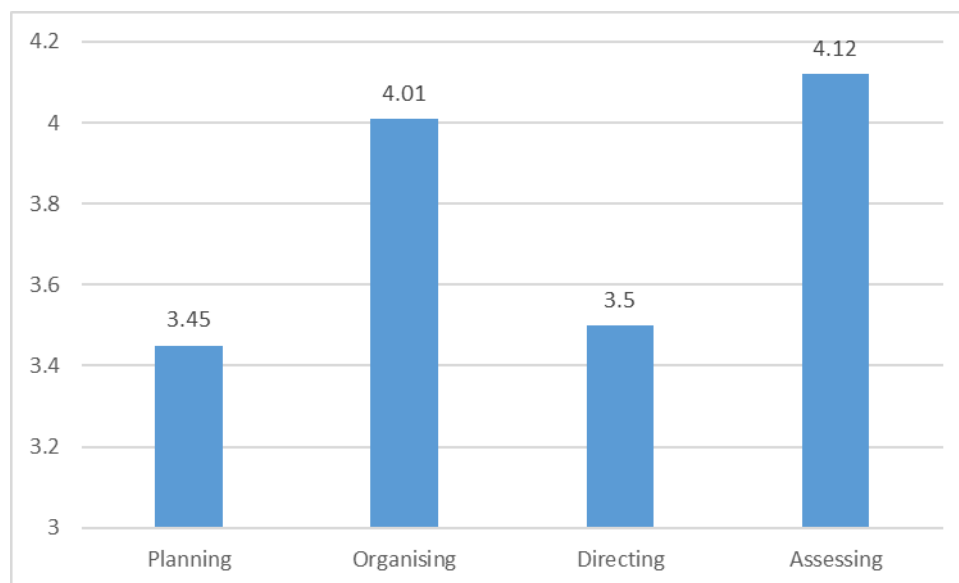


Figure 1. Level of Inclusive Education Implementation in Schools

Figure 1 shows that the level of performance of the principal's management functions in the management of inclusion for children with disabilities is only at a good level, with which the best-performed function is "Examination and evaluation" with an average score of 4.12 points; the function "Planning" is implemented at the lowest level with an average score of 3.45 points. From the above analysis results, it can be seen that the principal's management mainly focuses on the organization of assignment, inspection and evaluation; not paying attention to planning and leading the implementation of inclusive education for CWD. Therefore, the effectiveness of these activities for CWD in primary schools in Hanoi has many limitations existing in making plans to find out the capabilities and needs of children with disabilities to learn inclusion; identifying the abilities and needs of CWD in learning inclusion; directing, instructing and training to well perform the work of education; inspecting and evaluating the implementation of educational contents for children with disabilities. Survey results on the management of inclusive education activities for children with disabilities show that principals of primary schools have paid attention to the performance of management functions; However, the level of performance of the functions is not high and uneven.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Inclusive education is both an educational goal and a methodology (Slee, 2018) a philosophy and a legislative framework, a right, a means by which all other rights are realized, and a moral obligation. It requires new and transformative legislation, policies and practices, questioning of the status quo, and the dismantling of existing barriers. The results of the current study show that inclusive education in primary schools has been performed relatively well, but there are still some limitations to inclusive education management existed.

Therefore, in the coming time, the principals of these schools need to focus on implementing the following management measures well:

- 1) Strengthening the planning of inclusive activities for children with disabilities, paying attention to thoroughly grasp the goals of inclusion activities for CWD;
- 2) Well perform the assignment of tasks and relationships between members in the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities;
- 3) Training and retraining to improve the qualifications of inclusive education for teachers to well perform the direction and implementation of the contents of inclusive education;
- 4) Regularly inspect and evaluate the implementation of inclusive education activities for children with disabilities, paying attention to the adjustment of the plan after the inspection;
- 5) Create the best environment, learning and development conditions for CWD.

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