

## Original Article/ິພນົກສົນລັບ

## Inclusive or Segregated Classroom: A Question of Educating Children With Autism

Pareyaasiri Witoonchart<sup>1</sup>, Yun Ju Huang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders / Center for Health Policy and Management,

Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>National Taichung University of Education, Taichung, Taiwan

### Abstract

**Background:** Education for children with autism in Thailand has three basic options; inclusive classroom, segregated classroom, and no school at all. Since children with autism is one of many types of disabilities that mandated in the law to have basic education that provided by the local schools, however, it seemed that children with autism is one group of disabilities that was mostly excluded from appropriate education.

**Objective:** The purpose of this multiple-participant case study was to explore the factors that impetus parents and/or caregivers of children with autism in choosing the right education approach for their children.

**Methods:** Using a qualitative approach, two types of data were collected. The open-ended interviews with focus groups with parents whose children attend each type of schools was conducted. The interview questions and topics used during the focus groups are designed to provide insight into what the parents and/or caregiver think about their choice of the school selected. Second, the formal and informal observation note that took in schools. Finally, the data were analyzed by using Nvivo program which was designed to organize and manage unstructured of qualitative data.

**Results:** The results were lead to understand the question about educating children with autism in four main area: 1) educational historical determinism which referred to agendas that related to educating children with autism; but still had not yet fully implemented; 2) government marginalization of the need of education for children with autism which referred to unclear legislation about how to make the law related in educating these children plausible; 3) parental and societal: lack of understanding of educating children with special needs which referred to the misconception about these children learning ability; and 4) educational: unbalanced and unequipped special education professionals and the crucial reality consideration which referred to the questionable skills of teachers in teaching these specific group of children.

**Conclusions:** This study provided information with a reasonably good understanding of the indication of the academic and behavioral expectations for children with autism who attend the school which leaded to the conclusion of the appropriate school for these children with autism.

**Keywords:** Autism, Segregated classroom, Inclusive classroom

---

**Corresponding Author:** Pareyaasiri Witoonchart

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders / Center for Health Policy and Management, Faculty of Medicine

Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, 270 Rama VI Road, Ratchathewi, Bangkok 10400, Thailand.

Telephone: +66 2201 2425 E-mail: pareyaasiri.wit@mahidol.ac.th





## Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder.<sup>1</sup> Individuals with ASD differ from person to person in severity and combinations of symptoms that affects an individual's communication, social, behavioral, and sensory aspects of functioning.<sup>1</sup> Generally, they have frequently shown difficulties in social interactions and complex play skills, and are resistant to environmental changes and insist on monotony, which negatively impacts their abilities to predict future events or cope with alterations in daily life.<sup>2</sup>

In 2007, National Institutes of Mental Health stated the prevalence ratio of children with autism was 1:150<sup>3</sup> while in 2017 the National Autism Society stated the ratio was increased to 1:100.<sup>4</sup> In the meantime, in Thailand, the government record showed the ratio of children with autism 1:1000 with boy:girl ratio was 4-5:1.<sup>5</sup> In 2007, Ministry of Public Health released the number of people with autism was about 180 000 and only 20% received the basic education.<sup>4</sup> The number has been increased in recent years which means there is more children of autism who have to enter the education system more and more every years. It was widely accepted that inclusive education is one the most appropriate education for children with autism.<sup>6</sup> For this instance, children with autism usually excluded from school system as they might not perform well and show appropriately behaviors in class due to their limited abilities.<sup>7</sup>

Nobody can deny that without education, individuals with autism will likely experience economic and social exclusion throughout their lives. Exclusion from education results in diminished opportunities for personal development, access to vocational training, employment, income generation and other economic opportunities. Failure to access education and training limits achievement of economic and social independence and increases vulnerability to long-term poverty. For society, the benefits in the long run may be greater than the higher cost of providing education to children with disabilities.<sup>8</sup>

Education for children with disabilities in general began in many countries with special schools established by charitable organizations and individuals, often based around specific disabilities.<sup>9</sup> Government support usually followed, first to support private efforts, and then to establish public special schools or national frameworks for public-private partnerships.<sup>9</sup> Special schools can and often do provide an excellent education, and are still considered appropriate for some children with severe or multiple disabilities. In one hand, including children with disabilities regardless of types in every local school should not be exception but rather the rule.<sup>8,9</sup> However, in Thailand, these schools only enable a small percentage of disabled children to receive an education.<sup>7</sup>

Over the past few decades, school systems in developed countries began experimenting with moving children with mild and moderate autism into regular classrooms, giving them the appropriate levels of support they needed to be successful.<sup>8,9</sup> The focus shifted from an emphasis on the problems in children to the barriers that schools put up excluding their full participation. More recently, in the past twenty years, the Thai government has signed many United Nations (UN) agreements regarding the educational needs of children with autism within inclusive settings. Before that time, Thailand had only two educational systems; regular school settings in which there were no students with disabilities, and segregated school settings where students with disabilities receive their education in a separate school from their peers. In 1994, the Thai government had agreed to sign the UN Salamanca agreement<sup>10</sup> that considered including children with disabilities in regular schools. However, in Bangkok, the agreement has applied to only small number of schools. As inclusive education is an international goal, however, its practical conceptualization is still ambiguous, attitudes vary, and most of the literature is not based on empirical research.<sup>11</sup> While inclusive education seems significant to children with autism, Thailand may not be ready to implement inclusive education as its main education

system. Rather, segregated schooling may be a more practical option. For example, most school teachers are not trained as special education teachers so the cost of integrating all students with special needs in a class at a separated school is cheaper than integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms.<sup>12</sup>

This study aims to examine the factors that lead to the decision of choosing school for children with autism and explore the attitude and expectations of parents and/or caregivers of children with autism in deciding school for these children for the future use.

## Methods

This qualitative pilot study explored the factors that lead to the decision of choosing school for children with autism. The data was gathered mostly from interviews of parents and/or caregivers, also from formal and informal observations. The individual interviews were arranged at times and locations convenient to the participants. The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions and probes designed to elicit information about the practices and factors implemented to support the development and learning of students in school settings. The first section of the interview questions related to participants' demographic characteristics (gender, position, and educational background). The second section of the interview questions focused on the decision and expectations of parents and/or caregivers on factors that related to choosing the right education approach for their children. Each interview session lasted from 20 to 30 minutes, as influenced by the participants. Interviews were audio-recorded or, in situations when participants declined to be recorded, documented with hand-written notes. All interviews were transcribed to computer files. The observation and field notes were drafted at the parent-teacher meeting.

### Study Participants

The following criteria were used to select the participants in this study. First, they were parents of

students with autism who enrolled in the particular schools. Second, they were randomly selected by using a table of random number created from the teachers list. Using this method, fifty parents from five settings were selected.

### Sampling

This multiple-participant case study was conducted at four schools and one hospital in Thailand. Two of the schools are using inclusive approach where students with and without disabilities study together. The other two schools are solely segregated school in Bangkok for elementary students with disabilities such as autism, down syndrome, mental retardation, and behavior disorder. Also, the last setting was a clinic at a very well-known hospital which have many children with disabilities attended. In addition, an optional informational meeting was held for parents interested in learning about the study. Actual participation in the study is entirely voluntary. All participants had to sign and submit the consent form before being allowed to participate in this study.

### Observations

In this study, the formal participant observations were conducted in each school, which was parent observations and numerous informal observations. The observation was based on Observing Dimensions of Learning in Classrooms and Schools.<sup>14</sup> The observations did not scheduled, in order to participate in the actual environment of school activities.

### Interview Questions

The interview was based on the research question: What are the factors that lead to the decision of choosing school for children with autism? Apart from the research question, other questions were used according to the circumstances of the interviewees and the answers given. Interview questions were formulated taking into consideration the two outlines - How are students with autism educated in Thailand (eg, content, process, pedagogy, and expectations)? and what are the expectations of parents and/or caregivers of children with autism



in deciding school for these children for the future use? - that guide the study.

### Analysis

#### Data Coding

Most of the formal interviews were audio-recorded. The informal interviews were also be documented. During the data collecting process, the researcher did data analysis after each interview in order to form the subsequent interview questions.

The data were analyzed by using data triangulation in this study. Findings were confirmed through within-site data triangulation by a minimum of three confirming items, such as statements made by three study participants from the site or a combination of participant statements and evidence found in the observations or records. Observational and interview data were arranged initially according to the same coding categories. Because data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process,<sup>15</sup> field notes and interview data were continually examined by the researchers.<sup>16</sup> After careful and systematic review of the field notes and interviews, data were arranged and coded based on predetermined categories including “inclusive school”, “segregated school” and “special education” using Nvivo program with was designed specifically to support qualitative and mixed method research in order to organize, analyze, and find insights in qualitative data.<sup>17,18</sup>

#### Validity

Shadish et al<sup>19</sup> described validity as “a property of inferences which refer to the approximate truth in that inferences” (p 34). In this study, providing a thick description by documenting the time and places where the study was conducted was one of the ways to achieve the validity. Also, the liberal evidences such as quotes from interviews, and documents was provided to show how certain categories, findings, and conclusions were received.

#### Ethical Issues

In order to conduct this research, the participants were received with a voluntary consent form both verbally and in a written statement. The participants was told about the purpose of the study. The participants’ privacy and anonymity were guaranteed by altering all identifying characteristics, such as their names, ages, and positions.<sup>16</sup>

## Results

As from the first research question asked about the factors that lead to the decision of choosing school for children with autism, the results shed the light on many aspects as well as exploring the expectations and perceptions of parents and/or caregivers of children with autism in deciding school for these children for the future use.

**Table 1** Demographic Data of Participants

Data	No.					
	Sex		Age, y			
	Female	Male	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60
Inclusive	13	11	3	14	6	1
Segregated	17	7	1	5	11	7
No school	-	2	-	-	2	-

## Educational Historical Determinism

Two third of the interviewees agreed that one of the strong factors for them to choose the education for their autistic children was based on the legislation and practices that governed the rights to education to their children. Due to the fact that education for children with special needs in Thailand has been established for a long time. In 1990, The World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand agreed under the agenda of universal access and completion of primary school for students with disabilities, and further, recognizing children with disabilities as being entitled to an education that best meets their basic learning needs.<sup>20</sup> Three years later, the objective of the *Asian and Pacific Decade of Disable Persons* (1993 - 2002) was arranged. This agenda generally focused in including people with disabilities in society and in all mainstream development programs to reach the goal of full participation and equality of people with disabilities.<sup>20, 21</sup> During that time, much progress has been made towards raising awareness of the individual rights of persons with disabilities and including individuals with disabilities more fully in society and in the development process. Unfortunately, in Thailand, the majority of children with disabilities regardless of types continues to be one of the most under served and discriminated against groups (United Nations, 1990). Part of this may be due to the many barriers that exist between policy and practices, including negative social attitudes, limits to communication and physical environments, and inadequate access to employment and training.<sup>22</sup>

In response to these challenges, the Thai government implemented legislation with a specific set of goals and targets to improve the quality of life in many areas, including public awareness, national coordination, accessibility, employment and education. While progress had been significant in many of these areas, access to education has improved only slightly. The reality was that, like

most countries in South East Asia, the vast majority of Thai children with disabilities still were not attending school. Moreover, even of those that did attend school, many had not received a quality education, or had not continued on to secondary levels.<sup>23</sup>

More recently, in 2000, at the UN World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, the agenda was specifically affirmed about strategies and actions of education for children with disabilities was outlined in the outcome document *A World Fit for Children*.<sup>24</sup> These strategies included expanding comprehensive early childhood care and education for the most vulnerable groups, ensuring that the learning needs of all children are met through teaching them appropriate learning and life skills programs, and promoting innovation programs that include children who were previously excluded from education. From year to year, the Thai government addressed mandates in their national education plan and responded directly to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) agreement about including children with disabilities in regular schools and providing inclusive education to all children.<sup>20</sup>

However, the Thai government has long been known for funding a limited amount of money to its Special Education Department. Of the hundred million dollars given to the government to fund education, the Special Education Department has received 5% or less.<sup>25</sup> According to the national agenda, one of the challenges of transforming general education classrooms into inclusive classrooms is that many schools in Thailand where educational reforms need to be done did not have enough money to do so.

As from the interview:

*“It would be great if my kids can go to inclusive school. I’ve heard that only small number of children with autism can get in there since the school administrators said they couldn’t afford the cost of hiring special education teacher.”*



One of the parent whose his child is attending inclusive school said:

*"I have to be on the waitlist for almost 3 years to have my son get in the school. It's really hard to get in there...I have heard that there're many schools like this one (almost every province), but from what I heard the method of teaching is different."*

When asked whether the parents were aware of the law that every child have a right to education, one of the parent that had not sent his grandson to school yet replied:

*"Honestly, my nephew had been rejected from (many) schools many times. I have lots of work to do, so I don't have time to go there and get rejected repeatedly."*

*"Government didn't help any of us, except the money provided which honestly, it's not enough to live for even a month."*

#### **Government Marginalization of the Need of Education for Children With Autism**

Most of the interviewee mentioned that children with autism should be included in school and inclusive education as the best education for their children. However, some barriers were concluded such as the inclusive education is preserved to the medium to high socioeconomic status families instead of applied to everyone.

In this instance, inclusive education in Thailand was given strong support by the *Salamanca Statement* because of its reinforcement of the growing consensus that all children have the right to be educated together, and that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of achieving effective and non-discriminatory education.<sup>5</sup> Although Thailand is still lacking clear legislation supporting inclusive education for children with autism, it has made notable progress in more recent years.<sup>4</sup> However, because it is still in the process of integrating inclusive education for the disabled into the national Education For All (EFA) plans Thailand continues to has one of the broadest policy frameworks

for educating children and youth with disabilities. The National Education Act of 1999 mandates that the Government provide 12 years of basic education, at no charge to the individual.<sup>26</sup> Further, this act includes provisions for early intervention services, educational materials and facilities, flexibility in education management as well as home schooling supported by the government.

Putting inclusive legislation and policy into practice is difficult and at times imbalanced, often requiring significant school reform. Many interviewee agreed that they were refused to attend to local school due to many reasons. It cannot be deny that creating school systems may require reorganization such as moving from a system that supports segregated schools to mainstreaming children with disabilities, revision of curriculum to make it more flexible, the use of child-centered pedagogy, improved assessment and evaluation, capacity building for education personnel, and other inputs.<sup>27</sup> For schools to become more inclusive requires them to remove the barriers to participation by creating inviting, accessible environments that welcome all students, including children with disabilities.<sup>28</sup>

Governments, communities, schools, families and local and international organizations, are supporting the transition towards inclusive education systems. However, it appears that the government created only words about special education and inclusive setting in the national agenda without actually developing any progression about including children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Although, the government did some experiments such as establishing inclusive schools as models, however those experiments have not yet reach true population. After a decade of piloting, experimentation, and experience, much has been learned about what works and what does not work in various contexts. While governments, aid organizations, communities and school systems have learned that it is not easy to help schools become more inclusive, there are some methods and strategies that work such as including students with mild autism spectrum,

using adapt curriculum, and providing assistance for students with autism as needed.<sup>27</sup>

### Parental and Societal: Lack of Understanding of Educating Children With Autism

Most of the interviewee agreed to the understatement of the societal awareness of education for children with autism. The study was found that parents and society significantly lack understanding of special education. The various factors are presented as follows.

There are strict procedures for students with autism who want to attend the segregated and/or inclusive schools. Among these are laws requiring schools to give the Intellectual Quotient (IQ) test to students with autism to determine whether or not (s)he is qualified for attending inclusive schools.<sup>24</sup> Parents and/or caregivers perceived this as the most challenging obstacle to their children regarding their rights to attend a school where there is no discrimination, no isolation, and no pressure. Unfortunately, the students with autism who attend segregated school are limited due to two factors: first, parents may bring their children to the segregated school with a proof of document, required, and demonstrated by a specific doctor that the child does have a certain disability. If there is no available seat for the child, the segregated school board will place the child on the waitlist. Second, parents who would like to have their children pass the threshold, must receive a score that is equal or above 60 on the IQ test. If their children fail to pass it, (s)he would be rejected by the inclusive school board, and her/his parents would have to send her/him to the segregated school with document that provided from the doctor in order to find her/him a school in her/his obligated school age. According to one of the parent interviewees:

*“When I first came here (segregated school), people seem to know everything, but they said I need to contact the doctor first and ask for doctor’s recommendations of which school is proper to attend....They won’t accept it because of the inadequate IQ score....they (segregated school) said according to the law, my son can be accepted*

*only if his IQ test score is equal or above 60.”*

This strict procedure means that parents have no alternative, but to keep their child in a segregated school, even if they believe their children have the ability and/or potential to go to the inclusive school. According to another interviewee:

*“Since my son couldn’t make it (achieve the IQ score of 60), I don’t know what to do....they (segregated school) said they will put my son’s name on the waiting list of the next academic year because all the classes are full. I have to obey that because we have no choice....I wish I could have let my son learn along with other normal students, so he could learn something different....I still believe his test score can be improved in an inclusive school even though he got only 50 right now.”*

Teachers in the segregated school were graduated from the Special Education Institute whereas those in the inclusive school might not. This contributed to parents not only believe that the segregated school are the most specialized institution than any other school offering special services for their children but also trust the teachers in the segregated school for their professional knowledge and skills compared to teachers in the inclusive schools. According to Arpaporn, Pimtalak, and Pritsanu:

*“I think this school (segregated school) is a good school because all teachers graduated from special education, so that they can understand my son’s condition well enough.” (Arpaporn)*

*“I’m really satisfied because the most important thing is they understand my son. All of the teachers or even school administrators were graduated from special education specifically. I don’t think there are any other school that most concerns on students with autism than this school.” (Pimtalak)*

*“I think the segregated school is the most important school for students with severe autism. Inclusive schools will not prefer to accept all students with disabilities to study at their school.” (Pritsanu)*

Concerning the cost issue,<sup>10</sup> points out that maintaining



a segregated system is cheaper than integrating students with special needs into the regular classrooms. Parents in Thailand who have children with autism and who try to send their children into inclusive school may feel burdensome when they can not afford the high tuition in inclusive schools. According to Mook:

*“Most of them (inclusive schools) are really expensive, I can’t afford it....I want to give it a try, but I have no money to afford him attending a private school....I do have some money to afford my son’s education, but I’m not rich enough to send him to that school (private inclusive school)....I’m now working part-time and the earning is only enough to pay the rent.”*

Moreover, most parents in Thailand might have inadequate and/or incorrect understandings of what special education is; what special services society can offer to their children; and how to obtain effective and information that can help them understand their child’s symptoms. In addition, social norms have impacted parents’ perspectives, and as a result there is no quick fix to change the point of views that parents have complete belief and trust what professional suggest and express. According to Prajak, Sunee, and Kongkeatr:

*“Doctor said that my son has mild Autism. I don’t know what it means, so he recommended me to bring my son here (segregated school).... At that time, it sounded so scary to me because I had no idea about Autism or whatever.” (Prajak)*

*“When I contacted them (segregated school administrators).... they said I should contact the hospital to do the reference first.... because I think my son needed some medicine.” (Sunee)*

Under this ingrained belief and value that parents possess, albeit inclusive schools do exist in the Thai society, most parents become the advocates of segregated school system rather than the inclusive one, and do not know why it is a preferred educational setting. Notwithstanding, there are still potential voices against the segregated advocates, according to Kongkeatr:

*“I don’t think having all severe disabilities students in one classroom is a good idea especially when they are growing up. I think at this time, it’s OK for my daughter because she’s very young and she just wants to play....I want her to have more social interaction with other people not only disabilities, but without disabled friends.”*

As to the peer pressure issue that may occur in an inclusive classroom, study mentioned that students with autism do not feel pressured by teachers and their peers in segregated classroom.<sup>18</sup> According to Ti and Satang:

*“I’m not sure. I think maybe his classmates will talk to him, but there must be other students who will think that my son is an alien.” (Ti)*

*“The teachers in her classrooms weren’t pushing anything, so students in this classroom learn what they need to learn.” (Satang)*

#### **Educational: Unbalanced and Unequipped Special Education Professionals and the Crucial Reality Consideration**

Most of the time, parents mentioned about the availability of the resources provided such as teachers, facilities, and services. For them, they perceived that there is a significant gap in special education knowledge between special education teachers in segregated schools and the general education teachers in inclusive schools. Those special education teachers in inclusive schools tend to lack the competence to give appropriate education and care to special students. Realistically, there is a lack of job fairness in the special education market.

Teacher professionalism is one of the key factors that result in the maintenance of a segregated educational system in Thailand. As mentioned previously, teachers in the segregated schools are graduates from special education compared to those in inclusive schools. According to going, a mother of a child with autism and a third grade special education teacher in inclusive school, also Maesa who is a mother of a child with autism and an art teacher in

segregated school:

*“I’ve heard that some schools would like to become inclusive schools, but they can’t because they don’t have teachers who specialize in this area.” (Goong)*

*“Teachers will provide good care of their child(ren) because teachers graduated from special education area.” (Maesa)*

The most significant criticism of segregated classrooms is the marginalization of students with disabilities.<sup>7</sup> However, the idea of classification or isolation may exist in inclusive classrooms in terms of teacher’s prejudice. According to Trakarn:

*“Regular schools that want to include students with disabilities should acknowledge more about the types of disabilities. The teachers in schools have to ready about having no bias on students with disabilities.”*

In addition, the readiness of nationwide education is another hidden classification. According to Nick:

*“I think the primary concern is.... the Education Act about IQ standard, which I think they try to categorize students into those who are able to learn and those who are not.”*

Since teachers in the segregated school are regarded as professionals in the field of special education, most of them consider their job to be a higher calling even though they get less pay than those teachers in inclusive schools. According to Nick:

*“They (inclusive school teachers) get more money than teachers in segregated schools do because they get additional 2000 baht (USD 65) from supervising any additional special student.*

In an ever-competing society, achieving competency within one’s job has become a priority issue. Very few positions are prepared to offer opportunities to special education teachers particularly in inclusive schools, which then increase the problem of the excess number of unemployed special education teachers. According to Maesa:

*“I know some of private inclusive schools....*

*the special education teacher positions are also full.”*

In conclusion, the factors that lead to the decision of choosing school of children with autism will still be the question of whether the education system can move to the appropriate for children with autism or not. After the results were summarized, it seemed that parents and/or care givers geared to the inclusive classroom, but some of them were struggled with the idea of segregated classroom. The results also showed us the plausibility of changing the way education for these children should be and what should be done. The attitude and perceptions about method of teaching and learning, facilities that school provided, as well as the expertise of the teachers were questioned. All of the above that the study explored requires us more about the paradigm shifted, that should not be on the table of the decision makers only, but rather every stakeholders should be included.

## Discussion

Efforts towards enhancing the appropriateness of the education for children with autism in Thailand will no doubt continue to be an issue in the future respective of the difficulties currently encountered. Motivation to develop opportunities that might ultimately result in more widespread inclusion will be dictated, on the one had, by a growing awareness of the countless problems that these children faced in many ways. Therefore, it appears essential for Thailand government to be affirmed, with supporting strategies, so that a more effective educational system might ensue.

In addition, the results from this study may have theoretical and practical implications for Thailand educational system, policy makers, and practitioners. Education policy should target parental beliefs and expectations that play a significant role in the education of children with autism in inclusive schools.

In this study, it would be more comprehensive if more comparative research is included explicitly. “Understanding how educators relate to inclusion is crucial



since they are the key resource that will make inclusion a reality. Nevertheless, in the opposite case, they can also become the key barrier to desired development.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, realizing these factors that lead to the decision of choosing school for children with autism helps educators and/or researchers, to clarify their understanding of the status quo and the influences of diverse social contexts; reshape the current perspectives of existing knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices in relation to inclusive and segregated education.

Fortunately, not most of the parents opposed against the idea of inclusion; however, most of them are more critical of the practicability. However, some of the parents in Thailand are not optimistic about the practice of inclusion. Rather, they prefer remain on the status quo because of anger and the fear that their child(ren) may not be able to have a more careful institution if there is no competent special education teachers in inclusive schools and if there is no sufficient financial support from government to segregated schools. From this point of view, disseminating neutral and integral information of inclusion and segregation will be the imperative step that Thai government must now embark upon. Referring to Moberg et al<sup>28</sup>, “any policy to transform the school system towards inclusion that omits the accommodation of realistic additional resources and training support for regular class teachers is perhaps a much greater threat to successful inclusion than teacher attitudes.”

From the researcher perspective, there is a need for a greater shift towards an educational practice, rather than agenda paradigm. This would make a major conceptual shift and signal an accelerating movement towards the inclusion of children with autism in mainstream education. This means nothing less than developing, refining and implementing a national concept for inclusive education.

## Conclusions

Despite these methodological limitations this pilot study reveals that the interview is helpful and useful in measuring parents and/or caregivers’ perception of the education approach, in order to serve students with autism. Thus, it is possible to conceptualize which environmental factors need to be modified in order to optimize the potential of including students with autism in regular school in inclusive classroom. So, future study should focus on interpreting availability of and need for resources for students with autism in inclusive classroom. Follow-up interviews with teachers and school administrators are needed in order to understand the type, nature, and scope of their perspectives in inclusive setting. Information gathered through interviews will hopefully serve to improve content in teachers and parents for people who is involved in education system development.

\*\*All the names used in the studies are pseudonym only. \*\*

## References

1. American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association; 2013.
2. Heflin LJ, Alaimo DF. *Students with autism spectrum disorders: effective instructional practices*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall; 2007.
3. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Data and Statistics, 2014. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>. Accessed June 5, 2018.

4. The National Autistic Society. Autism and education in England 2017. <https://www.autism.org.uk/~/media/nas/documents/get-involved/held-back/appga-autism-and-education-report.ashx?la=en-gb>. Accessed June 5, 2018.
5. Limsila P. Autism in Thailand: From Textbook into Experience. In the Document of International Academic Conference titled “Teachers, Physicians, Parents: Dimensions for Autistic Person’s Potentiality Development. Bangkok, Thailand: Kasetsat University; 2002.
6. Hanbury M. *Educating Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder: A Practical Guide*. London, New Delhi: Paul Chapman; 2005.
7. Jonsson T, Wiman R. Education, poverty and disability in developing countries, 2001. <http://www4.congreso.gob.pe/comisiones/2006/discapacidad/tematico/educacion/Poverty-Education-Disability.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2018.
8. Evans P. Educating Students with Special Needs: A comparison of Inclusion Practice in OECD Countries. *Education Canada*. 2004;44(1):32-35. <https://www.edcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/EdCan-2004-v44-n1-Evans.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2018.
9. Stough LM. Special educational and severe disabilities in Costa Rica: developing inclusion in a developing country. *Res Pract Persons Severe Disabl*. 2003;28(1):7-15. doi:10.2511/rpsd.28.1.7.
10. Ferri B, Connor DJ. Tools of exclusion: race, disability, and (re)segregated education. *Teacher College Record*. 2005;17(3):453-474.
11. UNESCO. The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education, 1994. [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF). Retrieved October 20, 2006. Accessed June 5, 2018.
12. Arayawinyu P, Lertsilp W. *Inclusion*. Bangkok, Thailand: JNT Publishing; 2008.
13. Thomas G, Loxley A. *Deconstructing Special Education and Constructing Inclusion*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press; 2001.
14. Brown JL. *Observing Dimensions of Learning in Classrooms and Schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; 1995.
15. Bogdan RC, Biklen SK. *Qualitative research for education: an introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon; 1992.
16. Taylor SJ, Bogdan R. *Introduction to qualitative research methods: the search for meanings*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons; 1984.
17. Dykens EM, Hodapp RM. Research in mental retardation: toward an etiologic approach. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*. 2001;42(1):49-71. doi:10.1111/1469-7610.00702.
18. Dixon S. Inclusion - not segregation or integration is where a student with special needs belongs. *Journal of Educational Thought (JET)*. 2005;39(1):33-53.
19. Shadish WR, Cook TD, Campbell DT. *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin; 2002.
20. United Nations. *Asian and pacific decade of disabled persons: mid-point-country perspectives*. New York: United Nations Publication; 1999.
21. Price P, Takamine Y. The Asian and Pacific decade of disabled persons 1993-2002: what have we learned? *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal (APDRJ)*. 2003;14(2):115-127. <http://english.aifo.it/disability/apdrj/apdrj203/ap-decade.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2018.
22. OHCHR. *Convention on the rights of the child*, 1989. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>. Retrieved April 20, 2008. Accessed May 30, 2018.
23. UNESCO. *Strong foundations: early childhood care and education*. EFA Global Monitoring Report, Paris: UNESCO; 2007. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001477/147794e.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2018.



24. UNESCO. *Inclusion of children and disabilities: the early childhood imperative*. UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood, Paris: UNESCO; 2009. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001831/183156e.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2018.
25. Bureau of the Budget. *The budget Act of the annual expenditure budget*. Bangkok, Thailand: The Parliamentary Budget Office; 2018. [https://www.parliament.go.th/ewtadmin/ewt/parbudget/ewt\\_dl\\_link.php?nid=357](https://www.parliament.go.th/ewtadmin/ewt/parbudget/ewt_dl_link.php?nid=357). Accessed June 5, 2018.
26. ONEC. *National Education Act of B.E. 2542*. Bangkok, Thailand: Office of the Prime Minister; 1999. <http://asean.org/storage/2016/08/Thailand184.pdf>. Accessed May 30, 2018.
27. United Nations. *Pathfinders: towards full participation and equality of persons with disabilities in the ESCAP region*. Geneva, NY: United Nations; 2001.
28. Moberg S, Savolainen H. Struggling for inclusive education in the North and South: educators' perceptions on inclusive education in Finland and Zambia. *Int J Rehabil Res*. 2003;26(1):21-31. doi:10.1097/01.mrr.0000054970.12822.d6.

## Original Article/นิพนธ์ต้นฉบับ

## ห้องเรียนร่วมหรือห้องเรียนพิเศษ: หนึ่งคำถามสำหรับการศึกษาของเด็กออทิสติก

ปริยาสิริ วิทูรชาติ<sup>1</sup>, ยัน ฉุ วงศ์<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ภาควิชาพยาบาลศาสตร์สื่อความหมายและความพิเศษของการสื่อความหมาย / ศูนย์นโยบายและการจัดการสุขภาพ

คณะแพทยศาสตร์โรงพยาบาลรามาธิบดี มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

<sup>2</sup> มหาวิทยาลัยศึกษาศาสตร์แห่งชาติ เมืองไทยชุน ได้ทั่วไป

### บทคัดย่อ

**บทนำ:** การศึกษาสำหรับเด็กพิเศษ โดยเฉพาะเด็กออทิสติกในประเทศไทย แบ่งเป็น 3 ระบบ คือ ห้องเรียนร่วม ห้องเรียนพิเศษ หรือไม่ได้เข้าเรียน โดยเด็กออทิสติกจัดเป็นส่วนหนึ่งในกลุ่มเด็กพิเศษที่ตามกฎหมายจะต้องได้รับการศึกษาพื้นฐานโดยการจัดการศึกษาตามกฎหมายว่าด้วยการได้รับการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐานจากโรงเรียนในสังกัดพื้นที่ แต่ในความเป็นจริงแล้ว เด็กออทิสติกกลับเป็นเด็กที่ถูกกล่าวเลี้ยงระบบการศึกษา

**วัตถุประสงค์:** เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการเลือกรูปแบบการศึกษาสำหรับเด็กออทิสติก ของบุคคลากรหรือผู้ปกครอง

**วิธีการศึกษา:** การวิจัยแบบคุณภาพโดยเก็บข้อมูล 2 ส่วน ประการแรกคือ การใช้แบบสอบถามปลายเปิดกับบุคคลากรหรือผู้ปกครองที่มีบุตรหลานเป็นเด็กออทิสติก ซึ่งเข้าเรียนในแต่ละรูปแบบการสอน โดยข้อมูลที่ได้จากการตอบแบบสอบถามนี้ จะทำให้ได้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกว่าเหตุใดรูปแบบการศึกษานี้จึงเป็นรูปแบบที่ถูกเลือก ประการที่สองคือ การสังเกตการณ์ซึ่งมีทั้ง การเก็บข้อมูลแบบเป็นระเบียบแบบแผนและไม่เป็นระเบียบแบบแผน จากนั้นข้อมูลทั้งหมดที่ได้จากเก็บรวบรวมจะนำมาวิเคราะห์และจับกลุ่มโดยใช้โปรแกรม NVivo ซึ่งเป็นโปรแกรมคอมพิวเตอร์ที่ช่วยจัดระเบียบข้อมูลสำหรับงานวิจัย เชิงคุณภาพ

**ผลการศึกษา:** ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลให้บุคคลากรหรือผู้ปกครองเลือกรูปแบบการศึกษาสำหรับเด็กออทิสติกประกอบด้วย 4 ปัจจัย คือ 1) กฎหมายเกี่ยวกับการจัดการศึกษาให้แก่เด็กออทิสติก ซึ่งยังไม่ถูกนำมาใช้ในทางปฏิบัติ 2) จากการที่รัฐบาลไม่ได้เลือกเห็น ความสำคัญเรื่องการให้การศึกษาแก่เด็กออทิสติกอย่างแท้จริง ทำให้เกิดคำถามดังๆ เมื่อถึงเวลาที่เด็กออทิสติกต้องเข้าระบบโรงเรียน 3) ความตระหนักรู้ของสังคมเกี่ยวกับการให้การศึกษาแก่เด็กออทิสติก ซึ่งรวมถึงเรื่องของความสามารถทางการเรียนของเด็กเหล่านี้ และ 4) ระบบการศึกษาพิเศษที่ยังไม่อีกต่อการจัดการศึกษาให้แก่เด็กออทิสติกทั้งในเรื่องของครุภาระวิธีการสอน

**สรุป:** การศึกษานี้ทำให้สามารถพิจารณาข้อมูลต่างๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับระบบการศึกษาและพฤติกรรมต่างๆ ของเด็กออทิสติกที่ส่งผลต่อการเข้าเรียนในแต่ละรูปแบบของการศึกษา ซึ่งนำไปสู่ข้อสรุปของปัจจัยที่ส่งผลให้บุคคลากรหรือผู้ปกครองเลือกรูปแบบการศึกษาสำหรับเด็กออทิสติกเหล่านี้

**คำสำคัญ:** ออทิสซึม ห้องเรียนพิเศษ ห้องเรียนร่วม

**Corresponding Author:** ปริยาสิริ วิทูรชาติ

ภาควิชาพยาบาลศาสตร์สื่อความหมายและความพิเศษของการสื่อความหมาย / ศูนย์นโยบายและการจัดการสุขภาพ

คณะแพทยศาสตร์โรงพยาบาลรามาธิบดี มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

270 ถนนพระรามที่ 6 แขวงทุ่งพญาไท เขตราชเทวี กรุงเทพฯ 10400

โทรศัพท์ +66 2201 2425 อีเมล pareyaasiri.wit@mahidol.ac.th

