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A comparative study of teacher's opinions relating to inclusive classrooms in Indonesia and Thailand

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Pennee Kantavong [a, *], Sujarwanto [b], Suwaree Rerkjaree [c], Budiyanto [b]

[a] College of Local Administration, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand
[b] State University of Surabaya, Indonesia
[c] Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This research compared the work and opinions of regular school teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms in Indonesia and Thailand. These teachers were drawn from schools participating in an in-service training program to enhance the capacity of students with special needs in regular classrooms. A sample of 172 teachers in primary schools in Thailand and 165 from Indonesia answered a questionnaire based on Friedmen's concept of teacher burnout. Eighty percent of the Thai teachers had bachelor's degrees, but only 1 percent were in special education, whereas 77 percent of the Indonesian teachers had bachelor's degrees and 13 percent were in special education. Teachers' opinions on four areas were investigated: inclusion, support from various parties, work environment, and exhaustion. There was no correlation between background variables and teachers' exhaustion and fulfillment. There was a correlation between the number of students in a class and a teacher's de-personalization at the .01 level. When considering social dimensions and exhaustion, there was a correlation at the .01 level. There was a correlation between self-fulfillment and exhaustion at the .01 level. There was no correlation between the organizational, psychological, structural and support dimensions, and exhaustion. In general, teachers reported that they received support from various parties. Most of them expressed positive opinions of students with special needs.

Introduction

The situation of special needs education in Indonesia and Thailand may not be much different from other countries in Asia. Both countries began by creating separate schools for students with each disability, such as schools for the blind, for the deaf, and for the mentally-limited. However, these are not the only groups of children with special needs. There are more learners who find it hard to access both schools for specific needs and normal schools. In recent years, there has been an increased awareness in the governments of both countries that government should provide education for all groups of children. In Thailand, the policy of the government shifted to a target of education for all. While "children with special needs" is a rather new phase in Thailand, based on the philosophy of "education for all," the Thai constitution was enacted for the people's right to education in Thailand. Around the same time, the National Education Act was implemented in Indonesia. It aims to provide equal educational opportunity for every child. Both Acts cover some forms of discrimination against disability.

This can be seen in the 1999 Thai National Education Act, Chapter 2, which specifies the rights and duties of Thai

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citizens in education. The education system has to provide an equal opportunity for every citizen for basic education, guaranteed not less than 12 years. Furthermore, the government has to supply special education for the underprivileged, the mentally and the physically disabled. This chapter also emphasizes that special education has to be provided in an appropriate form according to individual needs, which are defined in Chapters 8–14, 22, 24, 28, and 29 (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999). Generally in Thailand, inclusive education is regarded at the national level as being primarily about disability; however, a broader concept of inclusive education with regard to including ethnic minorities is understood at some regional levels, such as in Southern Thailand (UNESCO, 2012).

The 1999 National Education Act requires the national system to turn its schools into inclusive schools, which should recruit all children into their classes without discrimination. As a result, schools needed to adjust greatly in order to accommodate children with diverse needs.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education of Indonesia defined inclusive education as an education system that provides opportunities for all students with disabilities and intelligence potential and/or special talent to receive education in an environment with students in general schools. In practice, inclusive education aims to provide opportunities to students with diverse needs, non-discrimination for all students regardless of their physical, emotional, and mental disabilities, as well as social disadvantages, to obtain quality education in accordance with their needs and abilities. In Indonesia, the operation of inclusive education is based on the following principles: 1) equality and the improvement of quality; inclusive education is a philosophy and strategy to gain equal access to educational services and improve the quality of education for all children, with respect for diversity; 2) diversity and individual differences in terms of abilities, talents, interests, and needs of the student participants; education should be pursued to meet the needs and characteristics of individual learners; 3) meaningfulness; inclusive education should create and maintain a welcoming classroom community, receive diversity, and respect the differences and independent learning of all learners; and 4) sustainability; sustainable inclusive education should be conducted for all types of lines and levels of education (Budiyanto, 2011).

The situation in Indonesia is not very different from that in Thailand. Hadis (2005) concluded that inclusive education is a new orientation for Indonesia as well. Inclusive education mandates encouraged Indonesia to reform its educational system for children with disabilities. Only a small number of regular schools, however, are willing to recruit students with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities.

Tsaputra (2012) said that "The development of inclusive education in Indonesia is indeed a bit left behind compared to progressive implementation of inclusive education in other countries. It is seen in the limited resources, knowledge, and skills required for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The existing curricula of general education have yet to fully accommodate the different needs of children with disabilities".

From 2015, Thailand and Indonesia will join the ASEAN community; sharing knowledge in the area of education development is one important approach that both countries can use to set the stage for future collaboration. As a UNESCO (2009) report pointed out, inclusive education and the enrolment of children with disabilities and other special education needs has helped to improve the quality of education for all children. School policies, support, and practices are important factors which will facilitate the development of all learners. Sensitive and responsive teachers are also a key factor in effectively educating children with disabilities.

Literature Review

Olson (2003) found that overall, special education and general education teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The teachers in her study indicated that a continuum of service needed to be provided in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2006) found that teachers had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in general classrooms. Some educators (Lim & Quah, 2004) have observed the problems of integration and inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream schools. The problems arise in the attitudes of others towards the inclusion of students with disabilities, because the inclusive class involves attitudinal and behavioral change on the parts of teachers, administrators, and students.

Often, teachers have no information or knowledge related to managing an inclusive classroom. In the past, medical treatment was considered the best option for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, and they were separated from the normal students. It is only relatively recently (Konza, 2004) that educators have reclaimed responsibility for the educational management of such students. Forlin (2008) pointed out that an increased understanding of teachers' concerns regarding inclusive practices will provide a substantial base upon which to implement new methodologies for the classroom. Besides teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge, their willingness to engage in inclusive practices is vital to its implementation for the inclusive classroom. Forlin found that teachers in Western Australia were concerned with their own expectations regarding their role during inclusive practice. They perceived their lack of knowledge and ability to cope with a child with a disability. Teachers perceived that they lack the necessary skills to provide adequate help to children with a range of disabilities. Hadis (2005) also pointed out that schools in Indonesia claimed that there were not enough trained teachers and a lack of special facilities for children. Changpinit, Greaves, and Frydenberg (2007) reported that Thai educators working with special needs children and who had majored in special education had relatively positive attitudes towards inclusive education and had good knowledge of inclusive education. Teachers who had positive attitudes and high levels of knowledge regarding inclusive education employed productive coping strategies and other approaches in their teaching. de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) reviewed the literature related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive

education using document analysis. They found that several variables were related to teachers' attitudes, such as training, experience with inclusive education, and students' type of disabilities. They reported that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience hold more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs than teachers with many years of experience. In addition, teachers who received training in special education hold more positive attitude towards inclusive education when compared to teachers who did not receive any training. They concluded that additional teacher training for working with special needs students in regular education leads to more positive attitudes and greater willingness to implement inclusive education.

Teachers' Opinion Concerning Exhaustion in Inclusive Classrooms

Talmor, Reiter, and Feigin (2005) concluded that the major causes of stress and burnout among teachers are related to three major factors: 1) personality variables; 2) background variables; and 3) environmental variables.

Regarding personality, Talmor et al. (2005) summarized that "personality variables such as over-sensitivity, idealism, devotion, being obsessive, avoiding assertiveness or maintenance of a locus of control, are personality attributes that contribute to burnout among teachers." Regarding background variables, the number of children at home and level of education are included. In Talmor et al. (2005) the work environment related to classroom management was categorized into three dimensions: the psychological, the structural, and the social. "The psychological dimension of the working environment includes mental and emotional factors. …. The structural dimension of the working environment includes: space, architectural design, and level of noise … The social dimension of the working environment includes all persons that come into direct contact [with the classroom]. It also covers sub-culture of the organization, leadership style of communication among colleagues. … The organization includes all bureaucratic aspects" (Talmor et al., 2005, pp. 218–219).

Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006) who studied education in Greece, showed that a number of cases within the Greek education system still do not qualify as vocational integration. The vast majority of teachers they studied believed that the dominant trend of segregation has been the result of ignorance in conjunction with the lack of accessible mainstream infrastructure, and a lack of educational opportunities for both the disabled and non-disabled individuals. They also found that teachers without any prior experience of teaching disabled students were less positive about a classroom where a disabled child was included.

Bourke (2009), Carrington (1999), and Slee (2006) also pointed out that reforms that have led to the development of "inclusive" education for students with disabilities and learning difficulties, based on the notion of diversity, involve radical reform that not only strives for organizational change, but also attitudinal change in relation to teachers' attitudes, the inclusive culture of the school, and educational platforms.

This present study aimed to compare the work situations of teachers who work in inclusive classrooms in regular schools in Thailand and Indonesia by identifying the related factors contributing to the exhaustion of teacher and teachers' opinion relating to the management of inclusive classrooms by analyzing various dimensions involved in classroom management and burnout. Some factors included "self-fulfillment" which refers to one's pleasurable feeling towards providing services to others and "depersonalization" which refers to the attitude of not paying real interest or taking the matter seriously.

Methods

This study was a comparative research survey. The sample comprised 172 Thai Buddhist teachers from Thailand and 165 Muslim teachers from Indonesia who work in inclusive classrooms. The research instrument was a set of questionnaires based on the framework of Friedmen's teacher burnout (as cited in Talmor et al., 2005). The questionnaire was modified to comply with the situation and culture in Indonesia and Thailand. The teachers were asked to indicate their situations on a five-point rating scale questionnaire, where $1 = $ not at all ($\bar{x} = 1.00{-}1.50$), $2 = $ somewhat ($\bar{x} = 1.51{-}2.50$), $3 = $ medium ($\bar{x} = 2.51{-}3.50$), $4 = $ high ($\bar{x} = 3.51{-}4.50$), and $5 = $ very high ($\bar{x} = 4.51{-}5.00$). The internal reliability of the questionnaire was .79 (Cronbach's Alpha). There were four parts of the questionnaire: teacher's opinion related to work in inclusion, work environment, exhaustion of teachers, and support from various parties. Unstructured interviews were also employed to obtain the additional data.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and percentage and presented in tabular form. The non-parameter Kendall's tau_b was employed to find correlation among the variables. The data from the unstructured interviews were analyzed using content analysis and presented in a descriptive manner.

Results

There was a similarity in the gender of teachers in the two groups studied, with 73.3 percent of Thai teachers and 78 percent of Indonesian teachers being female. While 83.7 percent of the Thai teachers had a four-year bachelor's degree, only 1 percent of these teachers had a degree in special education. However, 75.8 percent of Indonesian teachers had a bachelor's degree and 15.1 percent had received their degree in special education. In terms of responsibilities at school, only 13.4 percent of Thai teachers were responsible for teaching alone, compared with 17 percent of Indonesian teachers. The remaining teachers had additional responsibilities, with 86.6 percent of Thai teachers saying that they had to do more than one job whereas only 53.3 percent of Indonesian teachers had to do more than one job. Thai teachers tended to have smaller classes with 43.6 percent of Thai teachers having less than 22 students whereas only 38.2 percent of Indonesian had classes with fewer than 22 students. The two countries had

Table 1
Means and standard deviations of scores, teacher exhaustion

Item		Thailand		Indonesia	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
1	Exhaustion in inclusive classrooms	2.56	0.82	1.89	0.85
2	Self fulfillment	4.28	0.61	3.73	0.80
3	De-personalization	2.86	0.55	2.50	0.70
4	Organization dimension	3.30	0.59	3.41	0.80
5	Psychological dimension	3.59	0.74	3.63	1.05
6	Structural dimension	3.03	0.78	2.58	1.10
7	Social dimension	2.69	0.71	2.94	0.70
8	Support received	3.49	0.64	2.94	0.70

similar numbers of special needs students in each class—usually 3–5 students per class.

The situations of teachers working in inclusive classrooms in regular schools in Thailand and Indonesia show that both groups of teachers reported high levels of self-fulfillment ($\bar{x} = 4.28$, for Thais and $\bar{x} = 3.73$ for Indonesians), whereas teachers reported exhaustion in inclusive classrooms at the medium level ($\bar{x} = 2.56$), for Thai and at the "somewhat" level ($\bar{x} = 1.89$) for Indonesia (Table 1).

Regarding the findings related to work environment, it was found that the mean scores of both Thai and Indonesian teachers rated every main dimension at the medium level ($\bar{x} = 2.51–3.50$) except the psychological dimension which was at the high level for Thai ($\bar{x} = 3.59$) and for Indonesian ($\bar{x} = 3.63$) teachers. The sub-dimension included the items "The inclusion of SEN students in my classroom adds variability in my work"; "The work with SEN students gives me satisfaction"; and "The work in an inclusive classroom is a challenge for me."

On work environment and social dimensions, it was shown that the average mean score was at the medium level for both Thai and Indonesian teachers ($\bar{x} = 3.15$ and 3.14, respectively). Under this dimension, it was found that every sub-issue was at the medium level for both Thai and Indonesian teachers except the item "The work with SEN students demands self-discipline and patience" for which the mean value for Thai teachers was at the medium level ($\bar{x} = 2.84$) while for Indonesian teachers the mean was at the high level ($\bar{x} = 4.16$).

The structural dimension was rated at the medium level ($\bar{x} = 3.04$ for Thai and 2.58 for Indonesia), the lowest average mean score of all dimensions for both countries (Table 2).

Regarding the aspect of help and support from others, it was found that the mean scores of Indonesian teachers on the items for the "help received" dimension were lower than those of Thai teachers, especially on the items about help from a Special Education center, teaching assistance, and paraprofessional training. The means were at the "not at all" level ($\bar{x} = 1.41–1.50$ respectively) for the Indonesian teachers in these areas. However, overall, the average mean score of both groups were at the medium level (Table 3).

When Kendall's tau_b was employed to find correlations among variables within each group of teachers from the two countries, it was found that among Indonesian teachers, there were correlations between the age and exhaustion dimensions and the age and de-personalization dimensions at the .05 level ($r = .13, .12$). Teaching

Table 2
Means and standard deviations of scores, on work environment

Item	Thailand		Indonesia	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
Dimension				
1. Organizational dimension				
1.1. It takes a long time until students with special needs get diagnosed	2.90	0.94	3.18	1.07
1.2. It takes a long time until SEN[a] students get the treatment suggested for them	3.03	1.03	3.38	1.08
1.3. My role concerning SEN students in my class	3.47	0.95	3.83	1.10
1.4. The roles of the special education teacher are clearer to me	3.52	0.93	3.55	1.25
1.5. I am independent in making decisions regarding the SEN students in my class	3.58	0.97	3.10	1.19
Total	3.30	0.59	3.41	0.80
2. Psychological dimension				
2.1. The inclusion of SEN students in my classroom adds variability in my work	3.51	0.82	3.50	1.17
2.2. The work with SEN students gives me satisfaction	3.59	0.82	3.55	1.18
2.3. The work in an inclusive classroom is a challenge for me	3.66	0.81	3.83	1.20
Total	3.59	0.74	3.63	1.05
3. Structural dimension				
3.1. Total architecture of the classroom suits the needs of SEN students	3.10	0.82	2.48	1.09
3.2. The architecture of the school suits the needs of SEN students	3.14	0.89	2.66	1.30
3.3. There are special areas in the classroom suitable for use with SEN students (computer, reading, listening)	2.87	1.02	2.61	1.40
Total	3.04	0.78	2.58	1.10
4. Social dimension				
4.1. Inclusion of SEN students adds to the disciplinary problems in my class	2.99	0.97	2.89	1.10
4.2. I have a difficulty in giving evaluation reports to students	2.72	0.92	2.85	1.07
4.3. The relationship with the parents of SEN students is an additional burden on me	2.35	0.88	2.27	1.09
4.4. The work with SEN students demands self-discipline and patience	2.84	0.92	4.16	0.96
4.5. I have difficulties dividing my teaching time in class between the regular students and SEN students	2.66	0.87	2.97	1.25
4.6. The inclusion of SEN students adds to the social problems in my class	2.61	0.98	2.50	1.10
Total	2.69	0.71	2.94	0.70
Mean total	3.15	0.45	3.14	0.55

[a] Special education needs

experience also showed a correlation with the exhaustion dimension at the .05 level ($r = .12$). The number of students in class also correlated with exhaustion at the .05 level ($r = .19$).

Regarding the work environment aspect, it was found that organization showed a correlation with self-fulfillment at the .05 level ($r = .13$). The structural dimension also showed a correlation with exhaustion at the .01 level ($r = .16$). The social dimension correlated with de-personalization at the .01 level ($r = .29$).

Table 3
Means and standard deviations of scores in help and support from other

Item	Thailand		Indonesia	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Professional				
1. School director	3.88	0.83	2.39	1.86
2. Special education teacher	3.66	0.93	2.41	1.93
3. Parents	3.49	0.79	2.50	1.77
4. School counselor	3.30	0.79	2.13	1.75
5. Subject teachers	3.40	0.83	2.72	1.90
6. Personnel from SE center	3.32	0.99	1.41	1.58
7. Teaching assistance/para professional	3.36	0.92	1.50	1.71
Total	3.49	0.64	2.94	0.70

For Thai teachers, there was a correlation between the number of students in the class and the de-personalization dimension at the .05 level ($r = .17$).

For the work environment aspect, the structural dimension showed a correlation with exhaustion at the .05 level ($r = .13$). The social dimension also correlated with exhaustion at the .05 level ($r = .24$). The structural function correlated with the de-personalization dimension at the .05 level ($r = .13$). Support received correlated with exhaustion at the .05 level ($r = .22$).

Discussion

In the exhaustion dimension, Thai teachers rated at the medium level and Indonesian rated at the somewhat level perhaps because the Indonesian teachers in their help and support dimensions received neither support from the SE center nor teaching assistance when working in inclusive classrooms, even though they had the same number of SEN students in the class (3–5 students). Both the Thai and Indonesian teachers rated their self-fulfillment dimension at the high level. This shows that both Indonesian and Thai teachers felt fulfilled with their teaching. The findings from the interview revealed that teachers from both countries had positive attitudes towards their students. This supports the findings of both Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2006) and Olson (2003).

When considering the work environment aspect, the average mean scores were at the medium level, with the psychological dimension rated highest. The teachers felt that SEN students add variability to their work, giving them challenges and satisfaction. The lowest mean score was the structural dimension, indicating that the architecture of the schools suits the needs of SEN students at the medium level, being neither good nor poor.

The average mean score for the social dimension was at the medium level but the item, "The relationship with the parents of SEN students is an additional burden on me" was rated lowest at the somewhat level. This reflects the real situation in the context of sample schools which do not have many parents from the high socio-economic bracket. Consequently, teachers had to work hard to collaborate with parents of SEN students. However, teachers from both countries did not feel that it was a real burden on them to do this.

In terms of help and support from others, teachers indicated a medium level of support and help received. However, the Indonesian teachers did not receive help from the personnel at an SE center or teaching assistance like Thai teachers did. Consequently, their average mean score under this dimension was lower than the Thai score. This finding was supported by the data obtained from the interviews which indicated that in Thailand, the teachers in regular schools could get help from the SE center personnel when needed. In some areas in Thailand, schools under the jurisdiction of the local administration offices received additional budget to hire temporary teaching assistants.

The situations identified in Thai and Indonesian inclusive classrooms seemed to be different from the findings of Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006), who reported that teachers without any prior experience of teaching disabled students were less positive in the process of choosing a class where a disabled child was included. Here, the main problem for Thai and Indonesian teachers was that they had no knowledge or techniques to help enhance the development of students with special needs. Additionally, students with special needs in regular classrooms in Thailand were for the most part not physically disabled. The SEN students in Thailand included those with learning disabilities, ADHD and high functioning autistic students. In Indonesia, there were also a few students with visual impairment included in the inclusive classrooms, in addition to the three groups in the Thai cases.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigated the work situations of 172 teachers in inclusive classrooms in Thailand and Indonesia. They were drawn from schools participating in an in-service training program for enhancing the capacity of students with special needs in regular classrooms in Thailand and a program on in-service teacher training for inclusive education in Indonesia. A set of questionnaires based on Friedmen's burnout framework was used as the survey instrument. The background information showed that 50 percent of the teachers performed more than one function of duty at schools. A group of less than 1 percent of Thai teachers had a four-year degree in special education, whereas 13 percent of Indonesian teachers had a bachelor's degree in special education, 30.8 percent of Thai teachers learned from colleagues and 44.2 percent of Thai teachers received additional training courses while 27 percent of Indonesian teachers did. Their class-size was average with approximately 15–25 students per classroom.

It may be concluded that teachers in both Thailand and Indonesia should receive continuous support and training in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. If they do, the situation relating to the management of inclusive classrooms in Thailand and Indonesia can proceed. However, some schools in Thailand and Indonesia have inadequate and insufficient teaching materials. Teachers still develop materials by investing their own money. While this reflects a positive attitude toward their work with students with special needs, it is suggested that school policy should be clear about the management of inclusive

classrooms, and that in addition, school directors should provide both moral and material support for teachers who work with students with special needs. The SE centers, academics, and university units should join to help teachers to develop continuous improvement in their instructional techniques. At the same time, the Ministry of Education should be seriously and sincerely promoting the policy of "Education for All" along with a strategy to improve all students' academic achievement.

Conflict of Interest

Authors whose names are listed on this article certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript. There is no conflict of interest.

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