

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Findings from the study identifies one main challenge : how to improve the curriculum practice. Firstly, from researcher's point of view, the implications are focused on setting up an IEP group in each section ; have a more realistic curriculum for the severely disabled group ; effective preparation for work ; effective communication and follow up for inclusion in regular schools ; functional skills in academic section ; broaden the role of the Education Sub-Committee ; closer relationship between principal and administration ; broaden the role of Parents Support Group and have a centre for induction of new teachers. Secondly, this chapter will end with recommendations for further research and finally, conclusion.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 An IEP Group

Since the objective of the centre is to provide services and tailor made programmes for the needs of every student, the curriculum encourages the use of IEP, thus, researcher would like to suggest the setting up of an IEP group for each section of the centre. These sections are mainly divided by ACADEMIC (early intervention, nursery, kindergarten, standard one to four and form one, Functional Academic Class) and NON-ACADEMIC (stimulation, care group, independent living skill class, pre-vocational and vocational class). The objective of this set up is to let teachers of a particular section have the opportunity to see and meet each other periodically in a

formal way to discuss about students' progress, exchange teaching strategies, share problems and solutions and have the sense of collegiality among each other. Parents and students (if students are able to speak) can join in at the beginning of the year to provide all information and data needed by teachers. Inputs and ideas are welcomed as well.

If teachers felt that the IEP for each child is time consuming, then they can try to group the students with similar abilities and work out a plan with reference to the present curriculum. This IEP must contain long term and short term objectives, methods of teaching, daily or weekly monitoring sheets and an IEP performance chart to show the student's progress in a form of diagrams. Teachers should meet periodically, once fortnightly or on a monthly basis and discuss what are the problems or areas that need to be improved. Teachers can exchange ideas, information and experience of the child's needs. By having other colleagues offering suggestions a sense of collegiality.

At the end of the year, teachers could meet parents to announce their students' progress, to see how the plans have worked to help their child and give suggestions for next year's plan. Parents can actually offer some feedback alongside the teachers' work for the year.

5.2.2 Realistic Curriculum for Severely Disabled Students

Activities such as games, play, music, storytelling are useful methods to stimulate the severely disabled students. In addition to this, let them have the

opportunity to operate some leisure facilities such as listening to radio and music and playing some interesting computer games if the classroom has a computer. The content of computer game must be appropriate for developmental age and meaningful to the students. In general, the most appropriate types of programmes are games of strategy, memory and logic such as solitaire, blackjack and bridge are made available and can be played alone or with friends.

For those who have potential intellectual and physical disabilities, they could be exposed to some simple vocational work such as cleaning tables, arranging chairs and tables, gardening (cutting or trimming the plants), sweeping floor, folding and tearing paper, weaving. Further review of the results of several successful job placement programmes which served mildly, moderately and severely disabled persons is provided by research articles in Wehman, Hill, Goodall, Pentecost, Cleveland & Brookes, 1982 ; Greenspan & Schoultz, 1981 ; Wehman, 1981 ; Sowers, Connis & Thompson, 1979 ; Rusch, in press.

5.2.3 Effective Preparation for Work

Vocational training has prepared the students for open employment or internal employment in the Sheltered Workshop. Some students have problems with the working place and are not able to sustain the job. Perhaps, teachers can train the students in different setting, at the working place to let the students become familiar with the working environment, co-workers that they are going to meet and the work procedure. It could be one student in a small group of five. Teachers have to discuss with the employer and get permission to do so, which is quite difficult sometimes.

Have the employer visit the vocational classroom, understand the students ability and convince them that the students can work and achieve good performance. Teachers can organize a brief talk on the management of people and other potential employees in order to expose them to the disabled people. The concept of appropriate social skills plays a vital role for these students to adapt well to the work and their co-worker.

5.2.4 Effective Communication and Follow Up for Inclusion in Regular Schools

There is a trend to send off students early to regular schools if they are capable to compete with normal students. Before sending off the particular student, principal or teacher in charge from the centre should have continuous communication with the regular school principal or headmaster or teacher concerned. This communication should focus on understanding of the disabled child, what are the facilities that are needed to adjust or modify including teaching and learning. Teachers and the particular student from the centre can visit the regular school and give a talk to teachers and students there in order to provide them a good exposure initially. This more or less can minimise the anxiety of both parties and probably reduce the problems of occurring integration. Follow up and communication from both sides are advised to carry on for some time until the student can adapt well to the regular setting.

5.2.5 Functional Skills in Academic Section

The academic section of the centre should make modification more to functional skills learning and ecological based programme rather than just teach them

like in a regular school. Through the IEP set up, teachers, parents and if possible, the students should sit down and discuss what they want their child to learn and what are the possible things that can be learnt which benefits the student and for future employment and independent living. Computer aid could be a useful supportive teaching aid for teachers to teach them communication, reading, writing, creative arts, recreation and even vocational. Certainly, for those who do not have speech abilities, the computer can be used as an efficient, versatile and flexible speech output communication aid for them. The computer allows for three communication output modes : monitor display, printed material and synthesized speech. Students can use either the keyboard or a single switch device to operate the computer word processing programmes to write, store and print the material. In the area of art, many physically disabled children are limited to projects that require direct assistance from the teacher or to activities which require only limited fine motor coordination, such as fingerprinting. Art creation software allows for the production of colour artwork and animation. Computers also provide recreation activities for them. Games like chess, checkers, cribbage, monopoly and scrabble should also be available. Generally, games that require fine motor movements and time responses should be reduced or avoided as the area of stimulation may be limited to only fine motor movement.

5.2.6 Broaden the Role of the Education Sub-Committee

The Education Sub-Committee should not be restricted to just like a sounding board for teachers. Its role should be broadened to serve as advisor or supervisor to develop and evaluate the curriculum, to expose teachers to more teaching and learning knowledge through teachers' interaction with similar centres in Pulau Pinang and

Johor Bahru or other types of centres. Have them visit other centres to grab the opportunity to exchange ideas, experience in an informal way. Prepare teachers for training as it is and try to get some information from Special Education Department on what are the short term courses or seminars or workshops that are available for teachers to upgrade themselves continuously. In other words, knowledge can be obtained from print and non-print document. In addition, voluntary expertise is required as supportive member in carrying out the curriculum. This can be done by volunteers with related qualification or have them trained to help teachers in the classroom to assist the children. Ideas and advice can be obtained through internet as well.

5.2.7 Closer Relationship between Administration and Principal

At present, the role of administration and the role of the principal are separated. The administrators do all the paper work, have fund raising through various kinds of activities and provide the services necessary. The principal has the responsibility to run the school and at the same time, teaches in one of the classes. In fact, the principal with special educational background, should support the regular administrators and teachers as well. The principal could be one of the administrators in the organization and manage the school effectively. Thus, the centre's organization may be restructured with the above inputs so that the leader (principal) can be a team player and lead the effective implementation of the curriculum, the whole school, teachers, parents and students. The administrative part should be more related to special education knowledge base and should be more proactive.

5.2.8 Broaden the Role of Parents Support Group

The Parents Support Group may widen their network throughout the country through internet or newsletters in order to have constant communication with other parents to exchange ideas of parents coping skills, how to overcome stress and the latest information and knowledge about special education for cerebral palsied children. The partnership created in the centre between parents and teachers may not be limited to recreation activities but also in the children's learning skills such as having constant follow up with the IEP group and participating in the process of assessment.

5.2.9 Centre Induction

Induction or orientation could be carried out especially for new teachers to adapt himself or herself to the environment, the students, teaching and learning process and the structure of the organization. This job could be assigned to experienced teachers. The programme may not be too long. It may be two or three days with some observations in classroom teaching , visiting of the school, briefing about the responsibilities of the job and the nature of a voluntary welfare organization. The induction is important not only to a new teacher but also to experienced teachers transferred from other settings to the present one so that, they do not get a "shock" in this environment and also have the opportunity to clear their doubts and anxieties. This may be the first step towards building a sense of belonging.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This is an evaluative study of teachers' perception of the curriculum implemented in the Spastic Centre. A similar study can be expanded to the whole centre involving every member from top down and bottom up in each area in order to obtain a thorough picture of the development of the whole system. The study can be carried out in Malaysia together with the other two Spastic Centres in Pulau Pinang and Johor Bahru respectively in order to make comparison and see the differences of each setting, or the sample could be from children with other disabilities or adults with disabilities.

This study has investigated eight areas generally. In fact, every topic area can become an individual study as well. For example, parents coping skill, how well the parents cope with their children, what are the problems they face and solutions, how do they overcome their stress can be investigated. This study also can expand to, how well the children transit from the school to community, how many of them have sustained themselves on their jobs and how many have come back and why is this happening.

Case study of individual child's learning process may be an interesting research topic as well. The study can investigate various aspects such as social skills, cognitive skills, motor skills and so on with various strategies used by teachers in the classroom and parents at home and how the partnership of teacher parents can help the child to overcome the fear. This will require cooperation from teachers, parents

and the child with constant observation in the classroom and at home. In addition, interviews must be included to collect essential information and views.

5.4 Conclusion

In every classroom there are students with different levels of abilities and disabilities. There will be some students who, to a greater or lesser degree, are not “adapting well” in the curriculum. This is particularly obvious in the centre with children of various levels of disabilities. As classrooms size continue to grow bigger and more diverse, the number of students needing special attention increases, as do the pressures on their teachers to provide for their needs. This is the reality that confronts special education teachers in the centre and the dynamics with which they have to work. Based of the study findings, basically the existing curriculum is satisfactory but there are rooms for it to be improved and upgraded and so is it implementation. The challenge is that although teachers recognize the pressing need to adapt their instruction, they have little time to implement or even plan the adaptations. That could be one of the most critical parts in the process of curriculum implementation. While the curriculum is to be improved and perfected, a challenging teacher is thus, required to create ongoing opportunities to upgrade oneself with the latest knowledge and information so as to equip himself or herself with diverse kinds of teaching strategies and approaches. The initial teacher training does not prepare the individual to teach for life. It is the constant upgrading that will make a change in the classroom, particularly for the students. Together with a structured and flexible curriculum, teachers can make a difference to the child and to himself or herself too just as the quotation as follows :

"Imagine, then, a curriculum that has been designed considering the needs of a diverse classroom, a curriculum that has built -in means for the teacher to present the subject matter so that each student can have meaningful access to it using his or her abilities and strengths, without first having to overcome the usual physical, affective, or cognitive barriers or without having to be stigmatized or isolated from the other students. If a student has physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities, she will still be able to learn some or all of the same lesson as the other students" (<http://www.ericec.org/osep/ud-secl.htm>, pg. 1).