

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this research is to obtain teachers' perception of curriculum implemented in a Spastic Centre. Hence, the study is focused on how far the curriculum has achieved its stated objective that is congruent with the association's objective. Teachers are required to give views on weaknesses and strengths of the curriculum. The study also attempts to investigate teachers' perception of a few important areas such as helping children's learning skills, parents' coping skills, teamwork coordination, use of task analysis and IEP in teaching and learning, monitoring mechanisms, facilities provided in the centre, issues of transition and teachers' training. In addition, this study seeks to find out from teachers on what are the suggestions or solutions in order to maximise development of the curriculum in the centre.

This is a study of teachers' perception from the local Spastic Centre. Interviews and surveys were administered to all teachers separately. Interviews were administered to the members of management board as well to seek comparison with teachers' views particularly on congruency of curriculum objective and the association's objective.

3.2 Selection of Samples

A sample of 12 teachers and four members from the management board were involved in the study. There are 12 teachers who are teaching in the classrooms in the centre participated in the study. Four selected members, including one administrative director, one administrator, one senior clerk and the chairman of Education and Training Sub-Committee were the selected samples. The Chairman of the Education and Training Sub-Committee was interviewed because she was involved directly in the discussion, meetings and review of curriculum development for the students with the teachers.

13 teachers form the main teaching force in the centre at the time being. 11 teachers who are teaching in different classrooms, one principle and one academic head teacher were selected samples. The various classrooms are stimulation classroom, early intervention programme, nursery, kindergarten, standard one, standard two, three and four, standard five and above, functional academic class, pre-vocational and vocational. However, only 12 of them participated in the study.

Letters of permission (Appendix 17a, 17b) to do the study in the centre was given to the principal. Later on, letters of permission (Appendix 17c) to interview the administrative staffs and teachers were distributed and followed by the questionnaire to the teachers.

3.3 Research Tools

The research tools used in this study were semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with teachers and members of the management board.

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Samples were interviewed individually in English language before teachers answered the questionnaire. The interviews were structured and developed by researcher according to the purpose and research questions of the study. Researcher conducted the interviews with samples after submitted the permission letter to the samples involved. It is a semi-structured interview. Initially, members of the management board were interviewed and followed by teachers.

12 teachers (including the principal and the academic head) were interviewed in a separate time schedule. All interviews were recorded with an audio- tape to minimise the possibility of missing important points during the interview. Transcription of the interviews, word by word, was done to make sure a more thorough information is obtained. Questions of interviews for teachers and members of the management board are attached in the Appendix 14 and Appendix 15 respectively.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

Researcher has developed a questionnaire entitled “The Teachers’ Perception Questionnaire”. Item selection was based on needs for current curriculum implementation pertaining to education and services and current literature in special

education curriculum for students with cerebral palsy in particular and children with special needs in general. It could be administered within 30-40 minutes.

The questionnaire comprises of three major sections, A, B and C.

Section A is teachers' particulars. This section elicits information from teachers regarding their particulars, years of teaching experience in regular or special schools, years of teaching in the spastic centre, student population, training in curriculum development and educational experiences with curriculum development or modification.

Section B contained teachers' perception of several areas in curriculum. They include :

- a) Teachers' perception of children learning skills in the centre ;
- b) Teachers' perception of parents coping skills ;
- c) Teachers' perception of teamwork coordination (among teachers, teachers and therapists, teachers and other staff members) ;
- d) Teachers' perception of using task analysis and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in teaching and learning ;
- e) Teachers' perception of monitoring mechanisms ;
- f) Teachers' perception of facilities in the centre ;
- g) Teachers' perception of issues of transition ;
- h) Teachers' perception of teachers' training

The questionnaire consists of 84 items forced choice questions on a four-likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate whether they (1) Agree, (2) Tend to Agree, (3) Tend to Disagree, or (4) Disagree with each question or statement. These options have been chosen to allow the expression of some uncertainty especially those responders may have opinions that are not very strong or well-formed.

Section C is for comments and further elaboration of a specific item or in general pertaining to each topic area in the questionnaire for respondents.

A simple open-ended questionnaire (Appendix 16b) was developed for members of the management board for record keeping and study purposes. This questionnaire includes items such as respondent's particulars, highest academic qualification, job experience in special education, administrative training in special education, job satisfaction and involvement in curriculum development. The questionnaire helps to investigate the members' background in helping the researcher to understand better their views on curriculum implementation in the spastic centre.

3.3.3 Pilot Study

All questions in interviews and questionnaires were technically corrected in terms of clarity and meaningfulness of the content. The Teachers' Perception Questionnaire was piloted with six teachers in the Penang Spastic Centre. All of them answered the questionnaires fully. Based on the six respondents' answers, researcher managed to find items and choices that were confusing and contained unfamiliar

terminology. In Section A, a little confusion arose over the teachers' teaching experience in special school before. The question was rephrased.

In Section B, they understood all the items and terminology well except there was little confusion over the term, "task analysis". A footnote was inserted at the bottom of the particular page. Researcher has done modification on the presentation of the questions with sub-components by separating them into rows. In addition, based on the respondent's comment, a question was added on to topic area of "Parents Coping Skills". For the ease of data analysis, a few negative statements were rephrased into positive statements.

In order to further improve the questionnaire, participants were requested to give comments on the understanding of the questionnaire for each topic area. Unfortunately most of them have misunderstood and gave comments on issues pertaining to the topic areas and did not comment on the questionnaire.

However, their comments had inspired researcher to leave space for each topic area to allow flexible ideas, suggestions, implications or views beyond the forced choice questions for samples in this study. (Please refer to the revised questionnaire in Appendix 16a).

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection started with interviews with members of the management board. Researcher distributed the letter of permission a week before and was required

to fix a date of interview with them. Audio-tape was used to record their views. Two members were interviewed on the same day, that was 7th July, 1999, Wednesday afternoon.

As for the administrative director and the chairman of the Education and Training Sub-Committee, the interviews were carried out on 9th July, 1999 (Friday), and 16th July, 1999 (Friday) respectively. The average time spent for each interview session was 30-40 minutes.

Transcription was done right after each day of interview section. Researcher documented word by word manually in order to obtain a thorough information provided by samples.

Researcher carried out the teachers' interview sessions two weeks later. Letters of permission were distributed to 13 teachers to obtain permission to interview them on different days and the period of time fixed with them was from 19th July to 23rd July, 1999 (Monday to Friday). Audio-tape was used for the convenience of transcription and to avoid missing content. It was done immediately after each interview session of the day. On the average, there were two to three interview sessions were carried out per day.

By Monday (26th July, 1999), of the following week, survey questionnaires were distributed personally to every teacher. While distributing, researcher reminded every teacher to read the instruction properly and emphasized on the necessity to

answer all questions fully. They were given one week to complete the survey and on the 2nd August, 1999, Monday morning, researcher went back to collect the questionnaire personally. During the week, researcher had reminded all teachers regarding the due date to complete the questionnaire while volunteering in the centre on each Wednesday.

All survey questionnaires were collected back and samples involved in the interview sessions for both members of the management board and teachers were documented in the study.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis was a descriptive type. In order to answer the four research questions, interview questions were used to collect data of research questions No. One, Two and Four. While survey questionnaires were attempted to investigate research question No. Three.

In order to find out how far has the teachers perceived the congruency between curriculum objective and association's objective ; what are the weaknesses and strengths of the curriculum as well as what are the suggestions or solutions to maximise development of the curriculum in the centre, responses to the interview questions were content analysed and categorized manually into the forms of figures and tables which can refer to Chapter 4.

As for the areas perceived by teachers in the survey questionnaire, data would be analysed by using the average of four-likert scale score for each item and for each topic area. The average score will range between one to four. Lower the average score, means higher is the respondents' intensity to agree with the item. Conversely, higher average score means higher is the respondents' intensity to disagree with the item. Thus, an average score is an indicator.