

THAILAND

Job Preparing for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism in Special Education in Thailand

Sujin Sawangsri, Director, Lopburi Punyanukun School
Bureau of Special Education Administrator
Office of Basic Education Commission
Ministry of Education, Thailand

Introduction

When the people think of children with intellectual disability and autism, they usually think of inactive individuals. Overcoming exclusion through inclusive approaches in working is a real challenge and conceptual vision. If we think of education, the main aim of educating people wishes to acknowledge the greater contribution of investment to social capital. It's been one person who is able to work after learning something. Like students with intellectual disabilities or autism, we also wish to help them to find a job as well. Practitioners, who have provided their feedback and insight at various stages of this knowledge in education, hope to see each and all students working happily and properly.

Special education schools for vocational training for students with intellectual disabilities in Thailand saw the importance of the individuals to develop their highest potential precisely in 1973. The Thai government was aware of the right and potential of persons with intellectual disabilities by applying the international convention on the right of persons with intellectual disabilities, to protect the right of persons with intellectual disabilities and assist them in many ways. In the same year the Thai government formulated a policy improving the quality of life of the persons with disabilities, for them to have rehabilitation, encouraging them to have appropriate rehabilitation in eliminating the problems for persons with disabilities and stimulated nationwide development for all types of disabilities in various areas. Development of the body and the mind, including education in all types of education, supporting modern education, improving vocational skills and encourage the persons with disabilities to participation equally. A turning-point initiative seeks for full participation and cooperation equally among persons with disabilities (PWDs), leading to a close cooperation among governmental and private sector, among technocratic civil society and disabled organizations.

In 1991 the parliament issued the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act, paving the way to far more development in the area of PWDs, definition the various types of PWDs. The rights and advantages of PWDs had been given by law, and also appropriate Ministerial Regulations by the Ministry of Public Health locally and internationally. The Ministry of Education has material to play on carrying the mission for education in conjunction with the government policy, increasing efforts for more activity. The Office of Basic Education Commission strengthened basic education and special education and welfare schools, providing the services for children with disabilities and disadvantaged groups, according to the National

Education Act of 1999 and improved the law by an amendment three years ago in 2002. Section 10 states under the words “Educational Rights and Duties” the following:

“Section 10. In the provision of education, all individuals shall have equal rights and opportunities to receive basic education provided by the State for the duration of at least 9 years. Such education, provided on a nationwide basis, shall be of quality and free of charge.

Persons with physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social, communication and learning deficiencies; those with physical disabilities; or the cripples; or those unable to support themselves; or those destitute or disadvantaged; shall have the rights and opportunities to receive basic education specially provided.

Education for the disabled in the second paragraph shall be provided free of charge at birth or at first diagnosis. These persons shall have the right to access the facilities, media, services and other forms of educational aid in conformity with the criteria and procedures stipulated in the ministerial regulations.”

Government by the Ministry of Education expanded the services of education covering all school-aged children to receive basic education at least for 12 years since 1999. In the year 1994 the Ministry of Education invested to build more schools and special education centers for children with disabilities. There are 13 regional centers and 63 special education centers in the provinces covering every part of the country, a total of 76 special education centers, providing the services and collecting information about the children with disabilities. In terms of children with disabilities, the special education centers' important role is to provide basic preparation, coordinating among regular schools, operating in integrated education, and seek for them in the villages for rehabilitation and prepare them to be ready to attend at public schools in integrated education or to send them to special schools to study among their disabled peers.

Education System

Education for the children with disabilities in Thailand aims at helping them reach fully their potential of each person. They provide education and training at all levels to get their full rights as first-class citizens, to be good citizens for the country, have enough job skills for earning a living, able to lead their lives in Thai society as normal and in dignity, equally as others in society, as happy as others, and be with them in the integrated schools and vocational training centers, technical schools.

Education in the school system in Thailand, the Thai government regards as an important continuation, strongly supports and develops to make progress and prosperity for the future of the country. The education system is divided into three parts: one is education in the system, two is non-formal education, three is continuing education.

Education in the system

The government promotes people with disabilities to receive compulsory education, both general education and vocational, and higher education,

according to the educational plan. The government had announced that the students should receive 9 years for compulsory education free of charge in 2000; 6 years in Primary level, 3 years in secondary level. The age is stipulated at 7 -16 years old

Non-formal education

There is conformity for non-formal education in each community in all villages, which all centers provide both vocational training and general education to PWDs..

Continuing education

Continuing education is provided at special centers, responsible for these groups included PWDs, will prepare the learners to be ready and able to enroll to the system or home schools. Parents of the children can be a part of the system or to manage this form of education for their relatives by using their hospital or social education center.

Education for Students with Intellectual Disability and Autism

The Ministry of Education by the Bureau of Special Education Administrator has undertaken responsibility for the education of students with pwds and disadvantaged students. There are 43 special education schools in Thailand, 19 schools are schools for students with intellectual disabilities. 20 schools are schools for students with hearing impairment , 2 schools are schools for students with physical impairment, 2 schools are schools for students with visual impairment. The numbers of students with disabilities in special education school, totally are 12,992 students, of which 6,449 students are declared as intellectual impaired.

Besides this, 63 provincial centers and 13 regional centers on special education also provide services for students with disability, including information concerning students with disabilities, education and rehabilitation, all schools and special education centers join hands in keeping information in each province. They prepare them to be ready to disseminate or pass on for administration, in all levels of education or make preparation, and be able to be ready before the school year, so that all children will be taken care in various areas, medical doctors, rehabilitation to improve the potential, promotion to be integrated in public schools or refer to integrated program schools at all levels of education. Since special education undertaken the duty on providing the services for the children with disabilities and help them with education. Therefore curriculums of all schools have to be adjusted to the ability of children with disabilities.

The Curricular of the Special Education School for Students with Intelltual Disability

The schools for children with intellectual disabilities, including vocational, must prepare the students to be ready for a job and self- employment. Educable groups of students with intellectual disabilities have curricula, to study in the following parts: Academic subjects, like arithmetic, 50%, Daily living skills, 20%, Vocational training, 30%. Trainable groups of students have also curricula of learning broken down as follows: Academic subjects, 50%, Daily living skills, 32%, Vocational training, 18%.

In regular schools the curricula (in mainstreaming program) of the process of teaching follow the regular curriculum. Principles of evaluation can be adjusted appropriately according to the potential of the individual child. Sometimes we have to apply the curriculum of the special schools to suit the special needs of students in mainstreaming schools.

Prepare the Students with Intellectual Disabilities for an Occupation and Employment.

Schools for students with intellectual disabilities set up the system for job training and daily working. The students are assigned to be on job training, which suit to their potential. Students with intellectual disabilities will have their time-table or duty-schedule, throughout the semester, weekends and vacation. Activities aim at preparing these children to be employed by the school, as well as to train them on jobs, or they have job training in school. Main activities e.g. are picking up rubbish and waste, cleaning toilets, watering flowers, growing vegetables, gardening, growing mushrooms, dyeing clothes, washing and ironing clothes, doing kitchen work to prepare food, handicraft, etc. These activities are organized to train various jobs for the children, they can enjoy do these things and feel well and have self-esteem.

Besides, many schools work closely in cooperation with the vocational college, and technical college as networks for vocational training. Some schools provide the job training at schools with invited lecturer from networking college, some send their students to networking college to attend the job training. When some of them pass a complete training, the school will employ them to work at school, or transfer them to workforce, such as business enterprise, private and government sector. byhaving cooperation from all sectors, including job placement officers. They have to be well-trained, preparing knowledge, and capable to do the job

Prepare persons with intellectual disabilities for workforce, an important factor is the human being must be ready, they have to be qualified, up to standard requirement. They must be keen in daily living skills, be able to get medical rehabilitation, having the tools and media to help them access to public services, Then they will be ready in conducting their career of the job.

Best Practice in Job Training for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

I would like to emphasize on the best practices in job training for these students. The first school is **Panya Wuttikorn School**. This school promotes self-employment of students during school days, including youths with intellectual disabilities. In case of their knowledge and potential, the school has a project for temporary employment, so that this group of youngsters could gain experience for better skills and knowledge to satisfy their employers. The school has a vocational center for them. Each center is undertaken and conducted the skills for those youngsters for fully reaching the potential of them individually. By doing this, they graduate being recognized by society. This school is dividing trainees in three groups.

Group 1, vocation in school, this group of students is able to work regularly without assistance by the teacher throughout their curriculum. They will be

reassigned to work in different programs of the school, e.g. the school office, for office work, kitchen, cleaning and looking after the younger children, to assist teachers in different classrooms, receiving minimum allowance, about 1000 - 1200 Baht per month.

Group 2, trains vocationally in school in the form of shelter workshop. This group of students is able to carry on their work under the close supervision of their teachers. They work in the school shelter workshop such as producing detergent to wash dishes or clothes, or fabric softener and cleaning the floor. These inclusive jobs are making preparations for these youngsters to be ready for the future of work. Some jobs they produce souvenirs, receiving some regular income.

Group 3 - job training. this group is untrainable for a vocation. They may not be able to train to fulfill their job duties, but the families support and assist them in some parts, giving them easy orders, they can fulfill the job duties, but they do not have a regular income, but receive rewards sometimes, such as cookies, candy or fruits.

Another best practice is **Lighthouse center**, established especially for vocational training for students with intellectual disability. They conduct training for them to have knowledge, skills to work, enrolling youths with disabilities from the age of 16 up for training in various vocational fields. Cost is depending on the kind of job.

Example of training programs are :

1. Agriculture: Planting flowers and fruit for decoration, mushrooms, vegetables, biological gardening without chemicals
2. Home economic: Cooking without fat, iodine, including the home business
3. Handicraft: Making small items like small pots with plastic flowers, silk and various kinds of clothes
4. Artwork: plastic flowers, paper flowers, or clothes, etc.

The last show case is **the vocational training for Thai autistic children center** which was initiated by the Association of the Parents of Children with Autism, in cooperation with non-formal education department. This center has 50 autistic children receiving regular job training. Besides of basic education, they encourage autistic children to be trained on jobs appropriate to their skills and suitable to their interests, such as baking cookies or shortcakes for sale in shops, receiving a generous income, making photocopies, or printing paper for various schools, including gardening, growing vegetables for sale to the general market.

Conclusion

Students with disabilities must be prepared to take care of themselves from the early stage. Special education centers have to undertake a survey for identification and registration with the help of other sectors involved. Teachers, parents, doctors, therapists and administrative personnel have to work together to achieve job placement and self-employment. We have to remember that our students with disabilities will never enter the workforce without tools. Remember, my friends, the most important tools are education, education and education.