

The inclusion of children with Down syndrome in a mainstream primary school in Singapore

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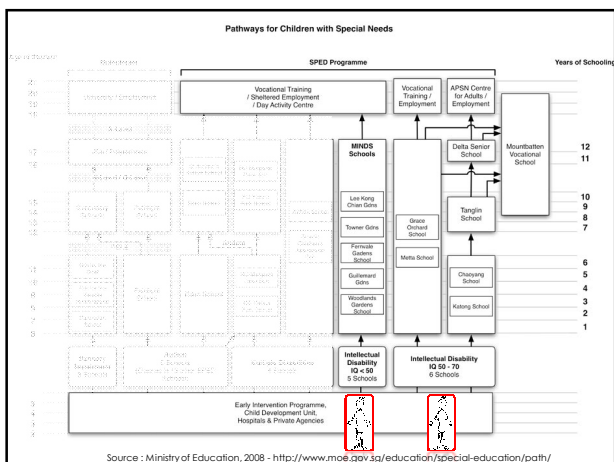


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Singapore's Education Landscape

- Dual system
 - Mainstream Education – mainstream schools under the purview of Ministry of Education
 - Special Education – special education schools run by Voluntary Welfare Organisations, supported by National Council of Social Service and Ministry of Education



Call for Inclusive Education

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong - "Government that will be open and inclusive in its approach, towards all Singaporeans, young and old, disabled and able-bodied..."
 (PM Lee - Swearing in Speech, 2004)
- Greater efforts to integrate people with mild disabilities into mainstream society, "beginning with the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools."
 (PM Lee - Speech at the Opening of SAS CP Centre, 18 Sep 2004)

Present Schemes of School Support

Since 2004 – Ministry of Education announced and implemented initiatives to support children with special needs (dyslexia & autistic spectrum disorder) in mainstream schools:

- Special Needs Officers (SNOs)
- Teachers trained in Special Needs (TSNs)

Other school support personnel:

- Learning Support Programme (LSP) coordinators
- Teacher counsellors

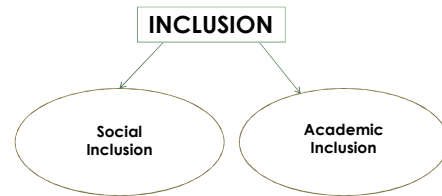
Source : Ministry of Education, 2008 – <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/support-for-children-special-needs/>

Education of children with Down syndrome in Singapore

- Majority in special education schools
- However, some mainstream schools have students with Down syndrome in their enrolment
- Type of support the students receive largely based on school's initiative
- No established model and experiential know-how to include students with Down syndrome
- Research project was established against this backdrop

Pilot project initiated by:

- Down Syndrome Association (Singapore)
- National Institute of Education, Singapore
- Mainstream primary school – located in central district of Singapore

Investigation into process of inclusionInitial process

- Employment of support personnel (Teachers to support students with Down syndrome)
- Establishment of new staffing position (Research coordinator) within DSA (Singapore)
- Selection and enrolment of students with Down syndrome into school programme
- Staff and participant briefings / preparation sessions

Project details

- Project commenced in January 2007
- 4 students with Down syndrome supported by 2 teachers employed by DSA
- Continuous Assessments (CAs) and Semestral Assessments (SAs) – not mandatory
- Individualised Education Programme (IEP) for each student

School Setting

- Participation in mainstream classes for selective core subjects (English, Maths) and non core subjects (e.g. music, PE, Social Studies, Health Education)
- DSA Teachers act as in-class supports for students with Down syndrome
- Individual remedial pull-out sessions for students in separate class

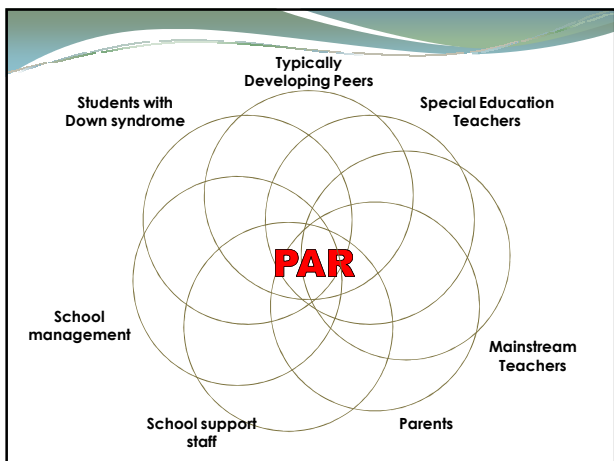
Methodology

Participatory Action Research

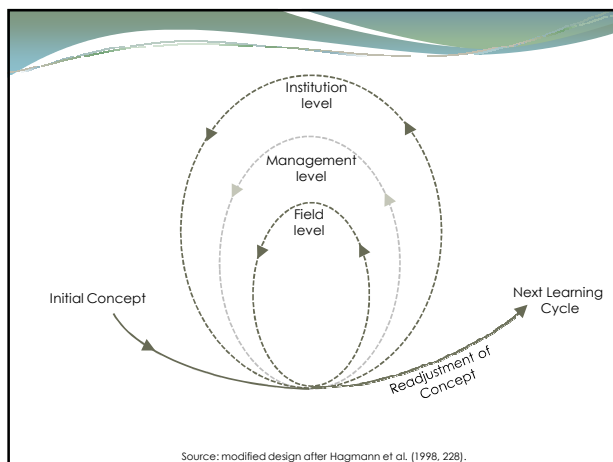
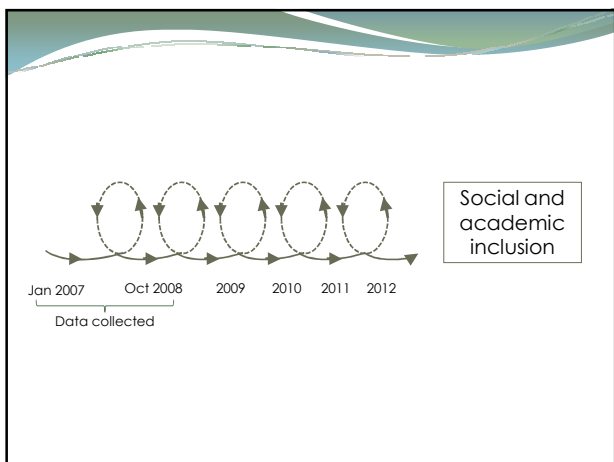
“collective, self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order improve the rationality and justice of their own social...practices”

“approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realise that the action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members”

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)



- Data Sources
- Teachers' (mainstream & special education) progress report
 - Portfolio of students' work
 - Audio-Visual (AV) recordings
 - Field notes
 - Interviews (with Teachers, Parents & Students)
 - Feedback sessions
 - Parent-teacher conferences
 - Parent-teacher communication booklets



Social:	Academic:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions • Relationships (with peers & teachers) • Communication • Social & Organisation Barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Timetable / Schedule • Teaching Strategies • Academic Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory • Speech and Language • Attention Span

Area: Mainstream Inclusion				
Situation / concern being presented?	Why the need to address this	Method	Data (source)	Outcomes/Findings
Students with Down syndrome only join in for non-academic subject classes (e.g. art & craft, music, physical education)	Lack of interaction with peers in mainstream class.	Teachers' feedback sessions. Parent feedback sessions.	Staff feedback, parents' feedback, referenced school documents.	Recommendations for the students to be designated time in mainstream academic lesson inclusion (i.e. Math & English).

Year 1, Semester 1

PM	1.00	1.30	2.00	2.30	3.00	3.30	4.00	4.30	5.00	5.30	6.00
Mon						RECESS		MUSIC			
Tues		ART	ART								
Wed								PE			
Thur					SS						MUSIC
Fri					HE					Life skills	PE

Mainstream class inclusion

Attitudes and perceptions

"Our boys do not feel like they are part of the mainstream class...it's like they're guests in the classroom."
(Special Education Teacher)

"Because I see them once in a while, I'm not sure how to react to them when they misbehave."
(Mainstream Form Teacher)

"They are not in 2 Patrick, one! They are from the other class."
(6 year-old peer in mainstream class)

Year 1, Semester 2

PM	1.00	1.30	2.00	2.30	3.00	3.30	4.00	4.30	5.00	5.30	6.00
Mon		Math	Math	Eng	Eng	RECESS	Eng	MUSIC			
Tues	Math	ART	ART	Eng	Eng			Eng	Eng		
Wed		Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng			Math	PE		
Thur	Eng	Eng	Eng	Math	SS					Eng	MUSIC
Fri	Math	Math	Eng	Eng	HE					Life skills	PE

Mainstream class inclusion

Changes in attitudes and perceptions

"There is improvement now, Mrs W would now ask if she needs to slow down to accomodate..."
(Special Education Teacher)

"I can handle them in my class, so I don't really need the special ed teachers in the class. I know that they need a break so I like to give them a short break during my lessons."
(Mainstream Form Teacher)

Challenges arising from:

Social:	Academic:	Organisation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of relationships (with peers & teachers) Speech & Language difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Timetable / Schedule Academic Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor memory Speech and Language difficulties Attention Span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole school collaboration Teachers professional development

Examples of Challenges

Academic:

- Students having difficulty in coping with core subject curriculum -> resulting in further challenges

Professional Development:

- Teachers (mainstream and Special Ed) required more training in classroom management, teaching strategies and working collaboratively

