

Evaluation of the Quality of Education Offered to Students with Special Needs in Public Schools in the City of Bauru, Brazil

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Abstract : A paradigm shift is a process. The process of implementing inclusive education, a system constructed to support all learners, requires planning, identification, experimentation, and evaluation. In this vein, the purpose of the present study was to evaluate the capacity of one Brazilian state school systems to provide special education students with a quality inclusive education. This study originated at the behest of concerned families of students with special needs who filed complaints with the Municipality of Bauru, São Paulo. These families claimed, 1) children with learning differences and educational needs had not been identified for services, and 2) those who had been identified had not received sufficient specialized educational assistance (SEA) in schools across the City of Bauru. Hence, the Office of Civil Rights for the state of São Paulo (Ministério Público de São Paulo) summoned the local higher education institution, UNESP, to design a research study to investigate these allegations. In this exploratory study, descriptive data were gathered from all elementary and middle schools including 58 state schools and 17 city schools, for a total of 75 schools overall. Data collection consisted of each school's annual strategic action plan, surveys and interviews with all school stakeholders to determine their perceptions of the inclusive education available to students with Special Education Needs (SEN). The data were collected as one of four stages in a larger study which also included field observations of a focal students' experience and a continuing education course for all teachers and administrators in both state and city schools. For the purposes of this study, the researchers were interested in understanding the perceptions of school staff, parents, and students across all schools. Therefore, documents and surveys from 75 schools were analyzed for adherence to federal legislation guaranteeing students with SEN the right to special education assistance within the regular school setting. Results shows that while some schools recognized the legal rights of SEN students to receive special education, the plans to actually deliver services were absent. In conclusion, the results of this study revealed both school staff and families have insufficient planning and accessibility resources, and the schools have inadequate infrastructure for full-time support to SEN students, i.e., structures and systems to support the identification of SEN and delivery of services within schools of Bauru, SP. Having identified the areas of need, the city is now prepared to take next steps in the process toward preparing all schools to be inclusive.

Keywords : inclusion, school, special education, special needs

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