

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Policy Document of Inclusive Education in the Context of Kuwait

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Abstract

This study examines the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education, *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*. In doing so it relates Kuwaiti policy to the global policy as represented by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). In examining Kuwaiti policy, CDA was used to explore the ways in which "slow learner" students and their families are positioned by policy and to explore the effects of the religious, social and cultural contexts in the articulation of such policy. Bell and Stevenson (2006, p.29) state that, "it is important to recognise the crucial role played by societal culture in shaping state policy". This allows deeper questioning about the purposes and potential effects of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education in a more holistic way.

Keywords: Inclusive education- disability. - medical model -policy document

Introduction:

Ainscow et al. (2006a, p.21) indicate that, "The issue of inclusion is increasingly evident within international debates" and the impact of policy on practice cannot be underestimated. Today, global policy efforts, such as UNESCO, support the development of inclusive societies. Nind (2014, p.528) indicates that, "Inclusive research and inclusive education share an ideological basis as political concepts based on moral or ethical superiority." Children with disabilities are now being included in regular classrooms, and this worldwide trend has gained popularity in the last three decades. Oliver (1996, p.87) states that, "Inclusive education is about a change in the ethos informing educational policies and therefore, the school's culture". Accordingly, Sharma et al. (2012b) indicate that in many developed countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia) legislation or policies have evolved to support an inclusive model of teaching students with diverse needs in regular classrooms. Similarly, several developing countries (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain) have introduced policies to propose the broader principles of inclusive education (Gaad, 2011). In this sense, "policy has to be given meaning by school communities, and because it embodies particular understanding of the education task" (Ainscow et al., 2006a, p.171).

Method

Documents

Documents can be a valuable source of information in qualitative research. In the present study, I collected official documents on inclusive education, from the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, with an aim to understand inclusion practices by investigating the strategies, policies, and laws adopted by the Kuwaiti government. After obtaining permission to use the documents, I critically analysed their content, examined their accuracy, completeness, and usefulness in answering the research questions (Creswell, 2012). Critical discourse analysis was used to analyse the policy document of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. Therefore, it was important to consider the meaning of CDA, its main assumptions, and its use in the current study. An overview of this approach is highlighted in the following section.

Concept and main assumptions of discourse analysis

Generally speaking, according to Jaworski and Coupland (2006, p.3):

discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations - it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals' interaction with society.

Therefore, discourse analysis searches for patterns of language in texts while bearing in mind the relationship of language within its social and cultural context, thus it shapes social order. In sum, texts can change or contribute to change in people's beliefs, attitudes, actions, or social relations, as well as in the material world (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse analysis also examines the ways through which language presents different worldviews and different understandings as well as the ways in which the discourse constructs the views of the world and identities (Paltridge, 2012). Discourse analysis evaluates both spoken and written interactions (Paltridge, 2012), although Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) claim that its primary purpose is to be meaningful to the user and to provide a deeper comprehension of texts. Thus, this approach helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education.

Findings:

- the key aspect of the medical model of understanding disability has been found throughout the articulation of *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*. These include concepts such as "categorization" and "labelling"; focusing on the "deficit" of the child with disability.
- considering the development of the mainstream school system and structure, promoting the values and principles of inclusion in the mainstream schools was not found in the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion.
- In the policy document, the role of the disabled and their families is marginalised. For example, the voice of students with disabilities is not considered in *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* and their parents' voice is limited to accepting or rejecting the transfer of their child to special classes.
- There is nothing mentioned in the document about children's rights. The document just states the procedures for transferring "slow learner" students from mainstream classes to special classes in regular schools to ensure some kind of school integration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the articulation of *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*, acts to create exclusionary practices for "slow learners" in mainstream schools, despite the exhortations of Islam; policy acts to discriminate, as indicated by (Ballard, 1999, p.3).

Understanding that seeing students such as the disabled as 'others' creates the discrimination of 'them' and 'us', valued and not so valued, that is a basis for exclusion.

The effects of the social and cultural contexts in the articulation of such policy play a fundamental role in the way that the current policy is presented. Discourses which encourage the independent and inclusive life of children with disability are not found.

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