

The role of school principals in implementing inclusive education in the Czech Republic

PETERS, Brenda; POTMĚŠIL Miloň: Palacky University
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(book review)

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The role of school principals in implementing inclusive education in the Czech Republic is one of the available literatures concerned with the development of inclusive education in central Europe. This book, however, focuses on leadership for inclusion and the inclusive practices of school principals of regular schools.

Brenda Peters and Milon Potmesil are the sole authors of the book under review. Their research focuses on the role of the school leader in developing inclusive attitudes and practices of staff and the wider community towards students with special education needs (SEN) in the Moravian region of the Czech Republic. They discern that the development of inclusion and inclusive practice in the Czech Republic is largely unknown outside the country when compared to other European countries, however, in sum Peters and Potmesil maintain that the Czech Republic purports to be moving towards a more inclusive educational system.

The book has six chapters and is written as a monograph. It begins by providing the reader with background and situational information, which are deemed essential to the investigation of school principal's attitudes towards students with SEN, and extant inclusive practices that occur within schools. The first chapter further describes the research problem, the purpose, the significance of the study and provides an overview and organization of the study.

In chapter 2, the authors' insights offer a cultural-historical perspective on inclusive education and the exploration of the inclusive practices of school leaders. Included in this chapter is the detailed conceptual framework that contributes to our understanding of the practices of inclusive education and comprises of philosophical perspectives, historical perspectives, cultural perspectives and professional/personal experience. The authors used related literatures that concern school principals and leadership from other countries such as United States, Australia, Sweden and the UK to buttress the issue. Intensive information about inclusive educational practices

in the Czech Republic is explored; for example, the Czech government's failure to address selective nature of its school system in that it has the highest percentage of students with SEN in segregated educational provision in the European Union. In addition, the chapter proffers, inclusive practices of principals in the Czech Republic and the research questions and hypotheses are stated.

Chapter 3 postulates the study design that involved two parts used to gather data. In the first part of the data collection schools principals' attitudes towards students with SEN in the Czech Republic are gathered by means of Bailey's attitude scale and results are compared with a renowned inclusive country, in this instance Sweden. The second part explores inclusive practices acknowledged by Czech school principals within their schools, thus, using survey research design. Included are a detailed procedure, recruitment process, data collection, instruments, validity as well as data analysis.

In chapter 4, Peters and Potmesil present the findings of the results gathered from administering the questionnaires that explored school principals' attitudes towards students with SEN and the extant inclusion practices that occur within schools in the Czech Republic, which are further explored in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 5 explains the results gathered in detail in relation to the research literature. Additionally, the chapter is organized in relation to the six elements of the activity system (Engestrom, 1987) namely the community, tools, outcomes, subject, role and rules. Peters and Potmesil conclude the chapter with the implications and limitations of the study.

Finally, chapter 6 draws the study together and connecting the implication of the findings to future developments of inclusive education and how such developments may be best supported and encouraged in the Czech Republic and future research directions were proffered.

Generally, the book provides new empirical data into staff attitudes and the inclusive educational practices in the Czech Republic and also exposes existing inclusive practices of school leaders in Moravia region.

It identifies the strength and weakness of school leadership inclusion and inclusive practice in the Czech Republic. Thus, this book does not only gives one an understanding of the role of school principals in implementing inclusive education in the Czech Republic but also that of many other countries.

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