

Review of doctoral dissertation by Khofidotur Rofiah: ‘Determinants of teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education: a cross-cultural perspective’

This report has been written to conform with the requirements of the Polish regulation (based on the Article 187, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Law of July 20, 2018 on Higher Education and Science; consolidated text of the Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742).

Overall standard of presentation

In general terms the dissertation has been written to a high standard of presentation in terms of structure and formatting. There are, however, numerous points at which proofreading is needed to ensure the text reflects Standard English throughout.

Demonstration of theoretical knowledge at Doctoral level

The candidate has demonstrated very clear understanding of particular areas pertinent to the focus of her research, but there are other areas that require further discussion. Specifically:

Strengths

Major strengths include review, and further use, of some of the research and publications pertinent to the focus of the work, and consideration of mixed-methods research projects:

- The discussion of attitudes, and factors influencing attitudes, is very strong, as is the candidate’s understanding, and justification for the use, of her theoretical framework, the Theory of Planned Behaviour.
- Her consideration of education philosophers in Poland and Indonesia who are seminal in concepts of inclusive education, is thoughtful and well considered. It would be useful also to see the candidate’s consideration of the extent to which these philosophers’ thinking is reflected in public policy, legislation and practice
- The candidate’s review of published literature and research studies has been well used to provide a justification for the research questions.
- The research design and mixed-methods approach to collection of data that would enable the candidate to address the topic of her study are very well discussed and justified.
- The way the data have been analysed is very competent.

Limitations

There are some concerns with regard to the nature of the concepts of special educational needs and inclusive education in the two countries, the constitution of the participant sets, some lack of detail about the working environments that have influenced teachers’ responses, the rather scanty discussion of cultural, including religious and other, influences on teachers in the national contexts of the two countries, and a rather odd use of ‘personal experience of autism’ as a variable among the teacher respondents.

- There is too little indication of what constitutes ‘special educational needs’ in the two countries, and how this links to the concept of inclusive education. At some points in the text there seems to be an understanding of inclusion as almost synonymous with integration in the same schools but in others an acceptance of inclusion as referring to catering for the individual educational needs of

learners in whichever school suits them best. There is also some confusion in the discussion of this topic. On p. 7 the reference to UNICEF describes inclusion as education in the same schools, not in the same classrooms as the candidate suggests. Equally the definition of special educational needs that is used in both countries should be elucidated. For example, the description on pp. 42-3 reflects a very clear medicalised/deficit model of those who experience barriers to learning in its discussion of the 'impact' of children's 'disorders' on the school and family environment. This is rather different from the environmental/contextual model as the source of barriers to learning that one might expect in many countries currently.

- The candidate has used convenience samples of participants in Poland and Indonesia. While she has justified the use of this kind of sampling in education research well, she should state very clearly how the participants were convenient to her work. To take one example: Indonesia. She has given the population numbers in the country as a whole, and overviews of the school sectors in which the participants worked, but not given any indication of how she came into contact with the participants or their location. This could be highly significant given the spread of islands, differences between urban and rural locations, overall numbers in the population as a whole and numbers of schools within this, and so on.
- The candidate should state her selection criteria very clearly beyond that of a convenience sample. Included in this – or elsewhere, if appropriate – should be a statement that addresses the issue of what the teachers themselves understood as inclusion and inclusive education.
- Consideration of overall location and sizes of schools, sizes of classes and so on in which the participants were employed is rather lacking but this is a really important issue in discussions of inclusive education and personal beliefs about this.
- Rather deeper discussion of cultural, including religious, influences in the two countries is important to the topic of this research study.
- The use of teachers' experiences of autism (or not) as a variable is rather odd, even though the candidate has discussed this in her review of the literature. Including this variable requires further justification.

Demonstration of ability to conduct research independently

There are indications of both strengths and limitations in the demonstration of ability of independence in research.

Strengths

The candidate has demonstrated clear understanding of how to design a research project, collect and analyse relevant data to address a research focus, use previous research and publications as one basis on which to justify questions in interview schedules and questionnaires, and discuss findings appropriately. She has justified the use of mixed-methods approaches in research studies very well, and taken good account of ethical considerations.

Limitations

There are some issues related to insufficient discussion of the attributes of participants (see above), and also of the national cultural, religious and political contexts that may well be influential in teachers' beliefs about inclusive education. This insufficiency has an obvious effect on the range and depth of the discussion and conclusions in the dissertation and reflections on its limitations.

The thematic analyses of data have been carried out competently, but there needs to be a clear indication of which proportion of respondents contributed to which theme, and how important each theme was to the whole participant sets.

Originality and contribution to knowledge

Study of the determinants of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education is a very important area of research across the world at the current time. Cross-comparison of views between teachers in countries with different national societal and cultural contexts enables foregrounding of particular issues that facilitate, or inhibit inclusion of learners who are disabled or experience special educational needs. The current research study should have the potential to contribute to knowledge in this area, to the benefit of young people and their families. However, there are areas in the text that require amendment or enhancement as noted above if it is to make this contribution. **I would recommend that the names of the two countries are included in the title of the dissertation if possible.**

Recommendation

I find that the dissertation of M.A. Khofidotur Rofiah entitled. "Determinants of Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education: a Cross-Cultural Perspective", prepared under the guidance of Professor Dr hab. Joanna Kossewska, UKEN, and Professor Kieron Sheehy, **when amended to address the issues raised in the above report**, has the potential to corresponds to the conditions set forth in Article 187, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Law of July 20, 2018 on Higher Education and Science (consolidated text of the Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742). I request that the Candidate be admitted to the further stages (**including editing and amending of the draft dissertation**) of the proceedings for the conferral of the degree of Doctor, in the field social sciences in the discipline of Pedagogy.

Reviewed by:

Janice Wearmouth (Professor)

Date of review:

14th March, 2025