

Critically evaluate a
research paper and
make
recommendations for
improvements to...

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

The research paper is about the opinions of 13-15 year old children who are pupils in a special school for children with difficulties in learning in the city of London (Brahm, 1997). The paper is written by Brahm Norwich of the department of Psychology and Special Needs Group in the Institute of Education, London University. His address is 25 Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AA, UK. The paper takes into account the children's views on integration and special schoolings, whether they had had tension in their opinions about special schooling relative to any stigma, perceptions about continuity of self, change and the possibility of self-actualization. I find the research credible and interesting. The researcher's findings suggest that the pupils had a tendency for self-expression. They suggest that the pupils were confident enough to reflect on the tension between being in a special school and the probable negative consequences of being in such a school, together with the stigmatization connected to it. The children, the researcher found, had positive opinions about being in such a school, relative to being in a normal school. The confidence levels of the children were unexpectedly high. However, I am of the opinion that Mr. Brahm should have used more data and carried out more interviews.

The topics discussed in this research project are adolescents, perspectives, stigmatization, inclusion and self-concept. The author is dwelling on the effects of seclusion of adolescent children who are in special schools for children with special needs, their perspectives on their environment, which includes learning environment and their thoughts about the other children who are in normal schools. The questions on this include, do they feel left

out? Do they feel alienated from the society in general? Does it make them feel less about themselves? All these questions are answered in this research. The topic of stigmatization has been researched at great length by Mr. Norwich. The other subject is the subject of inclusion (Davies, 1993). The researcher wanted to find out whether children with special needs need more inclusion in societal events such as in social gatherings and other societal activities. He also wanted to find out whether by being treated differently and being handled with kid gloves as opposed to how their peers and counterparts who are considered normal has any effect on their self-esteem (Brahm, 1997). In addition, how do this group of children see themselves? What is their view on their self-actualization? Are they able to grow normally like other children? Do their special needs make them less or more confident? When they grow up, do they grow up to be achievers like others or are they less people? Self-actualization refers to the perspective one assign to the value of themselves as individuals. What is the actual value they assign to their person? All these are subjects and sub-subjects that are discussed in details by the deft author.

Summary

The findings have been discussed in terms of pupil involvement in decision making, their provision of educational facilities, self-perception understanding relative to other groups (for example, the pupils who are in other 'normal schools') and the theory of internalization of other party's views in the construction of self. The purpose of the research is to give the significance and benefits in the assessment of children with special needs in

terms of their educational needs together with other needs. It also looks on decision making needs and provisions of these kids. In reference to the requirements of the Children's Act of 1989 (Davie, 1993), there is great significance in taking a young person's view into account about any subject that is relating to their education, places to stay and any other factor relating to their lives. The author got the idea about this research from the growing awareness about the benefits and importance of letting young children get involved in their own assessment and decision making. This is seen to be a way of respecting the children's rights as envisaged in the Act mentioned above. In addition, there has been a new Code of Practice specifically for special education needs. This Act is known as Education Act 1993. This Act recognizes the critical significance of assessing effectively and the intervention thereof, of children's involvement and their interest in the decision making process of their own educational needs. Schools are therefore expected to identify the young individuals' needs and requirements and take them into consideration. Their wishes and views are also of great importance. In short, what this means is simple. Pupils must be considered in the process of making decisions.

Moreover, the author recognizes the fact that the developments are seen as an outcome in the growing interest in the practical ways of taking into account pupils' perspectives. Similarly, questions on these developments are raised. For example, what is the weight of these perspectives? How are they inculcated in the decision making process? Compared to the opinions of both parents and teachers, what is their place in the whole system? Since adults are more knowledgeable and experienced, would they willingly inculcate the

pupils' views in the decision making process? Nevertheless, this paper has failed to deal with such critical matters. It concentrates more on the subject matter than what to do with it and how to address it. (Brahm, 1997) The author admits that the most significant part of this whole process is the question of whether the child should go to the special school or not. One of the key issues used to decide on this is how stigmatization is likely to affect policy deliberations and the integration process. Stigma can be described as the evaluation of the pupils who go to the special schools relative to what those who do not think about them or how they relate to them.

Critique

First, the validity of the research is in doubt. It is unrealistic to say the least. Only nineteen children were used to draw a conclusion of such magnitude. Another mindboggling fact is that Mr. Norwich used only one school. A research that is supposed to be used to draw conclusions which is to be used in policy making is supposed to be in depth and contain a wide array of information which can be used to make credible policies which when implemented can help in the changing of lives of the affected. The research questions are also too few in accordance to the kind of research this is. This is supposed to be either a qualitative or quantitative research. However, the author uses both, thus it is a mixed research. This brings in two sides. The aim of the researcher is not clear. The data is also insufficient. Thus to make a conclusion based on such minimal data is baseless. The author says that his findings should be used in policy making, to improve the lives of these children and others like them. However, I dispute this because of the reason

given.

Second, Mr. Norwich says that kids in special schools are bound to experience embarrassment and shame thus form a negative attitude. This he says raises the question about the relationship between self-perceptions and stigma. I want to dispute this finding. Human development dictates that what a person thinks about him or she is a result of socialization (Jaromileck, 1985). Undergraduate studies taught that socialization is key factor to what a person thinks about his environment. In my view, if a child is given love and affection at home, then he or she will not have any reason to seek acceptance from outside. Second, to establish the relationship between special needs in education and self, the scholar cites personal weaknesses and strengths as the indicators. He says that the importance of this is enabling more and thorough inquiry into the deeper thoughts of the affected children and their perspectives in their own terms. Mr. Norwich tackles this subject by carrying out interviews. The interview questions are what the perceptions of change and self-continuity of the child are, to what extent the individual personal strengths and weaknesses affect them, whether the said child experiences tension for the fact that they are segregated into the special schooling and what the pupil's perspective on special schooling and integration is(Davie, 1993). To comment on these questions, I think they were rather too general. The author should have personalized the questions. This could have had more effect. The research questions that the researcher uses are thus insufficient. As discussed above, the resultant data is therefore insufficient to draw any meaningful conclusions.

Next, Mr. Norwich's subjects are nineteen pupils. These nineteen pupils

include twelve boys and seven girls. They are all from an all age MLD special school in the northern part of London. The author says that the sample represents the wide range of all ethnic backgrounds found in the area aged between thirteen and fifteen years old. Of these children, five were fifteen years of age, ten were fourteen years of age and four were thirteen years. To add to the description, only one of them had been in the school for less than a year. The remaining eighteen had been there for eight years and over. I want to dispute the author's choice of subjects. In my opinion, he should have used a larger sample who. This should have had more accurate results. He also used less number of girls. The number of girls should have been at least three quarters of the whole sample if not equal to that of boys. As is well known in econometrics, the larger the sample, the less the error and vice versa. The researcher also used children from only one school. Therefore, his findings are less accurate. Would he have used children from different and various schools, he would have been more accurate. Therefore, his error was much. To add to that, the author used children from a school this had been previously threatened by closure for lack of appropriate staff and unskilled management. It is therefore my opinion that he used an inappropriate school. If he would have used a school that by that time was not dogged by controversy, his results would have been much different. The ethical considerations were also not considered when carrying out this research. The author uses children who are physically handicapped who are barely out of their teens. As much as the permission was granted from their parents and guardians, it is not morally right to carry out such a sensitive research without clearance first. Nevertheless, Mr. Norwich categorically

states that permission was granted. Thus there is some consideration since he considered that. Trustworthiness of the result is also in question. Without any credible evidence, the researcher makes claims and hypotheses that he expects policy making bodies to trust and use.

When it comes to methods of static result, descriptive statistics is used. He also uses mathematical statistics. When he uses nineteen children to carry out the research, he uses using mathematical statistics. He uses mathematical statistic to draw descriptive statistics. The results are in descriptive terms. This is alright considering the type of research the author attempted to carry out. The results are not credible but the author manages to use both methods deftly and bring out the results.

Nevertheless, I concur with many of the researcher's findings. For instance, his second research questions were on the pupil's perspectives about integration and special schooling. It was followed up by whether they experience stigmatization and tension (Jaromieck, 1985). This is in terms of how they feel about going to the special school and in terms of the function of the special school. The first findings were on the function of the special school. Most responses were that the function of the special school was to help the children who cannot read and write. The second response was that the function of the special school is for those who are slow in learning or have difficulties in learning and for those who are behind. I agree with the findings. Most special schools are designed to help he children who are in need of special help. For the part about the pupils' feelings about going to special schools, the response was sorted in two categories (Davie, 1993). The first one was positive and the second was positive/negative. Most of the

responses that Mr. Norwich goes were that good teachers are the ones that encourage the children to stay in the special schools. The next most common response was the fact that they hated the criticism leveled against them by the teachers. As a child growing up, I hated criticism. That is why I understand the children's feelings. I cannot level any criticism on this finding. In fact, I find this point strength to the research result. Criticism leveled to any individual no matter who it is may lead to different responses. In such a situation, I get the fact that the children may feel the way they do. Therefore, I am of the humble opinion that the author here has a point.

Conclusion

In reference to the critique I have done above, I am of the opinion that Mr. Norwich's work has more strengths than weaknesses. I therefore find his work credible and his findings true. Though I disagree with a part of his work, it does not make it less credible. In fact, his research has a lot of lessons designed to help policy makers who are concerned with the welfare of children with special needs. Personally I would recommend it to any interested party, scholar, or the policy makers.

Recommendation

My recommendations for this subject to the author are that he should use a larger sample in the future. Or in case he wants to redo it again, he should use more children and have a longer interview lesson. This research subject also dictated that the questions should be more personalized. However, I noticed that the questions were too general. Therefore, I want to recommend to the author that he should have more personalized questions that touch on

the core of the heat of children with special needs. My final recommendation is that the author should not include the views of third parties. For example, those of the parents.

References

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