Primary School Teachers’ Implementation of Inclusive Education during Emergency Remote Teaching in Malaysia: Findings from a Small-Scale Study

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Abstract. The rapid shift to online teaching or emergency remote teaching (ERT) following the COVID-19 pandemic requires a high level of inclusiveness in teaching efforts to ensure children who are at risk for learning are not left behind. Using a mixed-method design, this small-scale study (a) explored the relationship between Malaysian private and international primary school teachers’ attitude towards inclusive teaching during ERT, teaching efficacy, TPACK mastery, and burnout, and (b) identified ERT-specific factors that are associated with the teachers’ attitudes and experiences during ERT. The total of 28 teachers participated in an online survey that comprised four established scales to measure the teachers’ inclusive attitude, teaching efficacy, TPACK, and teacher burnout. The online survey also consisted of open-ended questions about their ERT teaching experiences. Two of the teachers who completed the questionnaire were then interviewed online. Attitude towards inclusive teaching was not correlated with all other variables, but (a) teaching efficacy correlated positively with TPACK mastery, and (b) high teaching efficacy, and high TPACK correlated with low burnout. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data generated four themes that supported the correlational findings: inclusion attitude during ERT, exclusion strategies, prolonged online teaching at home, and parental involvement. Findings imply that pre-pandemic inclusive teaching practices and TPACK were insufficient to fully support inclusive teaching attitude during ERT. New inclusive practices that support prolonged online teaching and effective parental involvement are needed to prevent digital exclusion during ERT. This small-scale study challenged the accessibility of online teaching during ERT and calls for the need to modify or reinvent our understanding of effective support for students with additional needs in fully online and distance learning conditions.

Keywords: inclusion, COVID-19 pandemic, emergency remote teaching, Malaysia