

# An Investigation of Educational Barrier-Free Environment in Taiwan – Using I-Lan County as an Example

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**Background and Purpose:** An educational barrier-free environment is important for students with special needs to fully participate in all appropriate school activities. It is also a basic element to meet the requirements of an inclusive education. Although educational barrier-free environment is quite common in developed countries, the educational barrier-free environment in Taiwan is not well established yet. The purpose of this study was to investigate the accessibility of mobility in schools for students with special needs, using the elementary and junior high schools in I-Lan County in Taiwan as an example. **Methods:** Thirteen elementary and 12 junior high schools in I-Lan County were investigated. The passways that students with special needs have to go through while participating in all kinds of school activities were investigated via a self-designed checklist of the standards of the educational barrier-free environment. The checklist was developed and based on accessibility of mobility in school and regulations of the barrier-free environment in Taiwan and other countries. **Results:** All investigated schools in I-Lan County failed to fully meet the standards of the educational barrier-free environment. There were 97.4% and 97% of schools that met the barrier-free criteria of the pathway being wider than 90 cm for indoor and outdoor passways, respectively. Only 30.0% of schools met all 4 barrier-free criteria, including not roundabout, no curb, pathway being wide than 90 cm, and smooth ground surface. **Conclusions:** Only a few passways that students with special needs passing through during the school day met our barrier-free standards in the elementary or junior high schools of I-Lan County. Students with special needs would not likely being able to fully participate in all kinds of school activities while facing these environmental barriers. (FJPT 2004;29(2):88-100)

**Key Words:** Accessibility, Educational barrier-free environment, Inclusive education, Passway

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