

INCLUSION AND DISABILITY: A CASE STUDY ON SCHOOL APPROACH FOR INCLUSIVITY OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY IN FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

With the development of educating young children, we have also experienced an improvement in one way or the other in this sector. With its growth we have seen several formal schools opening rooms for students with a disability, the study examines the progress as well as the things that are lacking behind concerning educating students with extensive and pervasive support needs in inclusive settings in reference with the education of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers and teachers in the context of the general education classroom. The study features the trends resulting from changing paradigms of disability in the efforts of the school to seek and provide the need for invigorating new perception and to educate students in inclusive classrooms. For the study, a case study was designed for three students with disabilities and an interview schedule for parents, teachers, and peers.

Keywords: *Disability, Student with Disability, Inclusion, formal institution, Perception, Case study*

INTRODUCTION

"If a child socializes only with another student like him/her, h(he) won't learn much about the different lifestyles of other people, and therefore instead of confining them only in a particular setting, they should be admitted in a formal institution" (Quoted by a teacher).

To inculcate inclusiveness in the education system, it is not solely the role of certain individuals, there is a need for collaborative intervention between teachers, special tutors, students, and parents to meet the needs of students who have disabilities, it will enhance their confidence and abilities in coping up with the right platform. Studies indicate that different schools use different methods for inclusion policies to provide the need for those students who have any form of disability, this will bridge the gap in sorting out the procedure to what is to be done and implemented. A child with a disability will certainly face challenges more than those who have no forms of disabilities, it creates many complications to the fact that they coupled the amount of learning as compared to other students. These, on the other hand, create scuffle for the parents as well as the teachers at school. In formal institutions the intake of students is generally quite large, therefore it is not too tangible for the teachers to supervise each student, this is where the problem can be located.

The education system today emphasized the vitality of securing an excellent performance from the students and it is largely because of the growth in contesting among educational institutions, this excludes the performance of students with disability and is also one reason where the intake of students remains low in such institution, for many, quitting school becomes the last resort, and it is evident from the study wherein a lot of children with a disability has no

proper education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), “Everyone has the right to education”, Rina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, made a clear statement that, “We raise the flag for education as a universal human right -- no one must be denied access because of disability...” Disability is a word that denotes different perceptions from different people, the general understanding of disability is objectified in less meaningful connotations. Deborah Kaplan, the Director of the World Institute on Disability, questions the definition of “person with a disability” and how persons with disabilities perceive themselves as knotty and complex. It is no accident that these questions are emerging at the same time that the status of persons with disabilities in society is changing dramatically.

Disability also refers to the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by the way society is organized which takes little or no account of people who have physical, sensory, or mental impairments. As a result, such people are excluded and prevented from participating fully on equal terms in mainstream society. Students with disabilities are diverse and have different needs and goals (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2011). Much variation exists within the population of students with disabilities; however, particular disability classifications are more strongly linked to negative educational outcomes, as well as to a lack of confidence, self-consciousness, and difficulties in understanding language and instructions (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010).

The 2015 UNESCO report estimated that more than one billion people around the world have some form of disability – with over four in five persons living in developing countries and 93 million of them are children under the age of 14 living with a ‘moderate or severe disability’. India is also one country with millions of people with disabilities; these colossal numbers of disability do not evoke shock to the mass for various reasons. Approximate figures from UNESCO shows that the situation is worrying with about 62 million children at primary school age having a disability around the world and 186 million children with disabilities who have not completed primary school education.

The development of inclusive education has gained momentum in the past few decades, certainly in the western world. A direct effect of this development was that in many countries separate schools for special education closed in favour of growing numbers of students with disabilities attending regular schools, according to UNESCO(1995), the present educational system of India has seen a transformation for years, the state, as well as central board, determine respective regulations in schools, some tend to be inclusive but other fail to recognize the needs, over the years, “differing orientations toward students with disabilities has led to a myriad of interpretations of what it means to provide inclusive opportunities for students with special needs, in particular those with intellectual disabilities”(Neubert & Moon, 2006; Rogers & Lavine, 2008).

The nuances and the subtlety to recognize the impact of students with disability is rarely visible, although the education system strives to reach out to all the students to have a comfortable life free from prejudices, the empirical approach doesn't seem to be in cognizance, more in written and verbal but less in action. A common belief in India is that it is a country still in a quest for a progressive and quality education for its children, and the most marginalized are girls and

children with disabilities. It is a job that is meant not only for the teachers or school but for everyone to help the students perform to their fullest potential and to ensure that they are not being excluded. There are many students with disabilities in current school systems, which can be challenging to the education system. Most students with disabilities present difficulties in building and maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers (Janney & Schoenfeld, 2008). Supporting students with disabilities should not essentially be left for teachers alone but it should rather be an all-encompassing affair involving a variety of stakeholders. Parents should play a major role in providing support to students with disabilities, especially at home. Special guidance should also come from parents and guardians to help make it possible for students to make ideal decisions in life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Zaretsky (2005), Currently, there is a paucity of dialogue about special education theorizing in the practitioner's arena. For example, few practitioners stand what theoretical underpinnings are associated with the practice of full inclusion or why others might favour a range of alternative placement options from segregated to integrated special education settings for students with special needs. In every prospect on the life of students with a disability, there arises a measurement to calculate their participation in different settings by determining whether s(he) is being excluded in daily affairs or not, or in other words how much of their belongingness are being noticed, strength perspective is one that helps initiate their capabilities. Hewitt (2005), in his article, remarked on a question of why some people are successful with students while others have given up on them? the author believes that it's because they have a strength-based focus and an optimistic perspective. These educators move "out of the problem and into the solution" by exhibiting eight behaviours of strength-based teachers. True to her words, these instances can be found in many schools in a practical approach, Hewitt also mentioned that, although in some ways it's helpful to know what the child cannot do and what he does not like, focusing on it does little to solve the problem... Talking about what the child cannot do or does not like, brings us any closer to finding out what he can do or what he does like, for this very reason strength approach came into handy, there is no objective for success when the whole vision is determining what the child cannot do, but should rather focus on the other aspect of what she can do, and what she can do about for ways to grow, learn and change with a passage of time.

Taking instances of a particular school, one student with a disability was seen sitting at the backbench of the class, the teacher could not make out whether he was listening or not, for all she does was concentrate on the teaching, the teacher later told the students to form a group among each other and give a presentation of what has been taught in the class, and surprisingly a student who was sitting at the back was not included in the group, when asked about the reason, the teacher replied that she doesn't talk as she has some mental problem. This is one example of a neglected child in a classroom setting with a child with a disability. If a teacher can apply a strength perspective, she may ease the difficulties while dealing with the child.

Legal mandates

Every law and policy are being created with an aim to improve the things that are not in order, likewise, there is also a law constructed to meet the educational outcomes for all children, including students with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) facilitates

student access into educational institutions receiving federal funds, and the Rehabilitation Act-Section 504 informs us about the types of supports (e.g., extra time for test completion, auxiliary aids, and sign language interpreters) that can be provided to students enrolled in classes. India does not have specific legislation like that of America, but the constitution of India guarantees equal treatment in every aspect irrespective of gender, caste, race, etc. The Right to Education (RTE) of India features some mandate that seeks to provide inclusion of students with a disability, but ironically there are very few researches being done on the impact of RTE with students with disability. Wherein the Constitution of India applies uniformly to every legal citizen of India, whether they are healthy or disabled in any way (physically or mentally), the right to education is available to all citizens including the disabled. Article 29(2) of the Constitution provides that “no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on the ground of religion, race, caste or language”. Article 45 of the Constitution directs the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children (including the disabled) until they attain the age of 14 years. No child can be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on the ground of religion, race, caste or language.

The constitution vividly mentioned the equality that it brought about, but in reality that does not seem to incur much of a formidable reason for practice. Although there are schools that give space for students to study in Formal Institutions, the question still needs to be answered of how they are being treated by the teachers, students, and peers? Do they have an additional teacher to be taught to the disabled students? Is there a separate curriculum or model prepared for such students? How does the school perceive the inclusion of disabled students in their institutions?

All this remains a question, where ratification in law is also required both in practice as well as in theory.

METHODOLOGY

For the study, a case study design and interview schedule were constructed. Three Students with a disability from three different schools in Mumbai were captured in the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Information regarding the Socio-demographic details of the participants including age, gender, education, religion, locality was collected. A separate scheduled interview was also prepared to understand the underlying relationship of the student’s sociological context from a different perspective to determine the inclusion in daily school activities, for that matter 12 teachers and 2 physical teachers were interviewed to examine the extent to which they perceive disability and to determine their attitudes towards inclusion in the classroom setting to further generate ideas on the level of gender, a coping mechanism, amount of special education training, content or subject area that are being taught and the availability of the separate special tutor. Apart from that, few parents and classmates/peers were also interviewed to examine their perspectives.

Note: For confidentiality, the name of the students in this study was replaced with a nickname or a name that is not directly related to them, and the name of the schools, teachers, peers are also not revealed for ethical considerations. The Ethical approval and permission for this project were given by the school teachers and prior consent with the students was taken from where

the study was conducted.

Table 1

Identification	Gender	Age	Grade/standard	Disability
Case no.1	Male	14	8 th	Down syndrome
Case no.2	Male	13	6 th	Down syndrome
Case no.3	Female	11	4 th	Autism

CASE ANALYSIS

As shown in table 1, case studies were conducted upon the mentioned three students, a semi-structured interview was conducted in school and a follow up at home, wherein some of their parents were interviewed. In selected schools, the teachers and peers were also interviewed. *All three identified cases live with their parents.

Case no.1: The first student (case no.1) is a 14-year-old boy studying in 8th standard, he was diagnosed with Down syndrome at a very young age. During the interview with his parents, the mother mentioned that when he was a toddler, he was healthy but his motor development was not within normal limits he struggled with sitting, standing, and walking. His motor skills and inconsistent imitation skills were observed at a very young age. Amidst his disability his story is something that can be portrayed as hopeful, he has managed to make a lot of friends, he also has a passion to participate in classroom activities. He likes interacting with his classmates as well as with his teachers using gestures, body language, and vocalizations; he also likes giving answers in the class, sometimes when even not being asked, his effort and enthusiasm in the class are appreciated by many, when asked if he has a favourite teacher, he shouted out loud the name of his class teacher's name, sometimes his classmates will answer for him before he even utters the name, and he also enjoys the activities in the class, his favourite is making sentences using pictures, he also likes to write numbers, oftentimes, when the class lecturer is going on you, he will be seen busy writing.

During the reading session, all the students were asked to sit in small groups of 3 or 4 students, after that one of them is told to select a book with short stories. The student who has selected the book reads it aloud to the peers in the group and then the rest will follow. Every participant in the group gets a chance to read it out aloud. The rest of the students will follow him, all the students get a chance to select a book and be the lead in the story group session. During the session, the teacher, noticing that he was struggling, selects a "simple" book for him and reads it to him. He then asked him to read after her, with a clean voice and clarity he was able to manage to follow the lead. The teacher also realizes that he wants to sit with a group of students and be part of the group rather than sit and read with someone else.

The teacher sometimes conducts a remedial class for him and also provides him with a basic English reading book so that he can practice it at home, every reading session, he was given homework of two or three sentences, and interestingly he was able to manage without any hindrance. His spirit to learn was appreciated by many. This is one case study that shows a flow

of participation of a student in a classroom setting without any rejection, the teacher does not focus on what he cannot do but rather making it inclusive learning because she has faith in the student that he is capable, this case study is an illustration of strength-based perspective in a classroom setting

Case No.2: The second case is of an 11-year-old studying in class-5 who has some learning difficulty; his case was chosen as part of the case study. His challenges include communication, impulsivity, and behaviour that may include tantrums, aggression, and property destruction. These challenges have made it difficult for him to participate in activities with peers. His communication development was delayed; he began using vocalizations at 9 months but had developed no words by 3 years.

His participation in classroom activities is very minimal, he is usually considered a loner from his classmates when the researcher interacts with him, he gave a little or no response, he is a very quiet person, the teachers in the school are well aware of his problem and that his concentration level is low yet he is allowed to attend the class without any objection. During recess he will be seen seating all alone in the classroom, there is no sort of association with his peers.

Case No.3: The third case is a 12-year-old girl, studying in 6th standard, she has a problem that is very similar to the previous two cases, she struggles with language processing. Amidst the disability, she has a stronghold of support from her family members. Her mother is a homemaker and father- a labourer, both works very hard to give their daughter and other two children the best opportunities possible. While interacting with her parents her father didn't say much but clearly states that he is very fond of her daughter. Her mother is a strong woman, during the interaction, most of the questions asked about their daughter were responded by her mother, she has good communication skills even though she has no formal education. In observing the case with her parents, it was noticed that both the parents are very affectionate towards their daughter, for her school lesson they rely on her siblings who are studying in the same school. Their anticipation and love towards their daughter were observed, when asked about the treatment, they responded that because of the lack in financial status they cannot do a proper diagnosis for her daughter nor be able to provide her with enough resources.

DISCUSSION

The approach of the teachers

Students with disabilities in classrooms present some of the hardest challenges for teachers and peers. It is, however, vital to understand that there is a dire need to address these problems because failure to do so presents a greater possibility of diminishing the future of students with disabilities (Gumpel & Sutherland, 2010).

When asked the teachers their opinion and their understanding on inclusion, most of them replied that it is an act of representing an individual without any discrimination, another teacher remarked that *"she does care for the students with a disability but the number of students is so much so that she cannot focus on any individual irrespective of the person's disability"*, the teacher further went on to say that they should be admitted in a special school. Another teacher when asked if it is needed for a student with a disability to be admitted in a regular institution, she remarked that it is not at all necessary, her reason was that *if a child socializes only with*

another student like him/her, h(he) won't learn much about the different lifestyle of other people, and therefore instead of confining them only in a particular setting they should be admitted in a formal institution. Some teachers shared common grievances, by mentioning that there should be a model prepared or training for teachers on disability because even though they cared for their students who are disabled, they couldn't do much as they are not much educated when it comes to dealing with such students. Waldron & McLesky (2011) remarked that "Students with learning disabilities benefit from the inclusion model classroom where they learn alongside their regular education peers. In this setting, they have a chance to reach their full potential in an instructional model that is inclusive and geared to support and challenge students with and without identified disabilities".

Different teachers use different strategies to deal with such students, they prepared their classroom teachings accordingly, there was this one teacher in a school in Mankhurd(Mumbai), when asked if she gives any importance to students with a disability, she states that she makes sure that if there are any such student it is her responsibility to get them educated and provide them with the needs that they required, to that reply, she was further prompt how she managed that, her reply was, "I usually have a personal interaction with them and give them a remedial class as well, I also from time to time talk to their parents of how they are doing at home, adding to that most of these students take a little more time to sync what has been taught in the classroom teachings, yet I do not judge them for I know their capabilities".

An interview was also taken from some of the physical teachers (PT) in the school, the responsibility of PTs in schools has most to do with keeping in line the physical attributes of the students by providing them with the necessary resources or activities, one of such is Games and sports. The PT was asked how he handles students with disabilities in such activities, he replied that "since I cannot risk injury or harm to them, I do not involve them in games and sports, and also it will be a hindrance to their fellow mates, as most games are rigorous and competitive in nature". (The popular ones are- kabaddi and Kho-Kho)

Peers at School

To facilitate the full inclusion of children with disabilities, there is an urgent need to improve the attitudes of other children towards them. Historically, the literature on the social status of children suggests that students prefer peers with whom they have something in common who are more like themselves, have good social and communication skills, who are leaders academically or athletically, and who do not exhibit extreme behaviours (Adler, Kless & Alder 1992). Rosenbaum, Armstrong, King (1998) Past studies have found that children's attitudes are generally more negative towards peers with disabilities than towards non-disabled peers.

During the interview with students on their relationship with students with a disability, lots of unusual vocabularies were noticed, such as "weird, half-mental or scary", when asked the reason some students replied that because -they never talk to anyone but themselves, they will try to beat them, they create some unnecessary noise because they are mad, these were most of the common answers that were gathered in the process of the interview.

The lack of education that is required by students in this matter is quite limited, they stigmatized others who do not quite respond to a situation like them, but they are not to be blamed fully because most students are not aware of their condition, during one of the interviews with a student he replied that "nobody, even his teachers have never taught them

about disability, how to treat them or how to socialize them with them”, this is a scene in most of the schools, and is one reason where intervention is required, where peer support is needed for the upliftment of a student who has some sort of disability.

The approach of the school

In a study from different schools, it was found that there are issues about adequately publicizing support services, teachers training, students’ curriculum, etc. it was also noticed that most of the teachers in schools have little experience with/or training about disabilities apart from the resources that were lacking. The situation in schools is losing its essence of inclusivity, it is proving to be a complex and controversial issue in education, with considerable debate about what inclusion means has been described by Stoler (1992) as synonymous with the least restrictive environment and the regular education initiative.

Though in most of the schools, the intake of the number of students with disability is recognizable which is seen by many as an approach of an inclusive method used by the schools, practically that does not seem to happen in real life situation, only their enrolment is noted, there is no specific model that is prepared for students with disability neither do they have a special tutor for such students or no resource provided nor is available to be utilized by students with disability. The lack of attention by the school management shows a threat to students with a disability, the school rather than playing as an agent for such students instead limit their existence in such environment, it is high time a change is brought upon after all a school is one institution that shapes and moulds the life of a child of what s(he) will become in the long run.

Role of the parents

The respondents who were interviewed regarding personal and family influences on education agreed that there were some positive factors, which includes encouragement and support from the family that ideally pushed them during school hours. At the same time, there were negative elements that derailed their efforts, including drug abuse, sexual abuse, lack of proper correlation with parents, and emotional abuse among others. They also unanimously assumed that their families generally had a positive attitude toward education. Issues surrounding relationships, family needs, lack of self-confidence, teacher’s attitudes, and increased responsibility are some of the things that students with disabilities faced, which influenced their decision to quit school. The factors varied from one student to another due to differences in lifestyles and backgrounds.

Learning disabilities and daily challenges in schools

An abstract from the study of, “Education of persons with intellectual disabilities in India, states that, “Historically in India, persons with disabilities enjoyed co-existence, though, at different times, the treatment and attitudes were at variance. Out of all the types of disabilities, intellectual disability poses greater challenges than the other types. The families of persons with intellectual disabilities do also have needs different from others, which cannot be segregated from the needs of children with intellectual disability”, this particular study, can vividly be understood in a school setting where a lot of the times students with disabilities face greater amounts of challenges. A study conducted in schools can also be put forth for an example, in a particular private school, Mr A managed to make a lot of friends in school but his learning was very gradual, he was able to repeat what the teacher was saying, but when asked to say on his

own, he struggled hard and failed to grab the word that was coming out from his mouth, it was a slow process. When asked the student about his classroom learning, he replied that it was good, but one cannot take into the assumption that he is a good or bad performer by whatever he says, but his classroom environment should be assisted by the teachers.

In another scenario, it portrays a contrast from the previous case, the student states that she doesn't have (any) friends, when asked her classmates the reason, they replied that she does not talk to anybody, and when somebody tries to communicate with her, she fights back instead. These are various responses that are gathered during the interview with students in schools, the result which in many ways seemed too unfortunate.

CONCLUSION

Identifying common reasons why school students with disabilities face difficulties can inform the successful application of various prevention strategies and techniques that might eventually be generalized to other populations. While students may face difficulties for diverse reasons, common factors may exist that could point to opportunities for change within the school to better support at-risk students. The literature rarely, if ever, focuses on the early indicators and warning signs behind the negligence of special education students. Issues surrounding relationships, family needs, lack of self-confidence, teacher's attitudes, lack of peer support and increased responsibility are some of the things that students with disabilities faced.

Over the last several years both scholars and practitioners in special education and disability studies have begun to critique the whole notion of inclusion, creating a heated debate about what exactly constitutes inclusive educational programs and practices for students with disabilities. Two approaches to providing accommodations and modifications are widely used by general education teachers in their classrooms. Differentiated instruction is a model in which teachers plan flexible approaches to instruction in the following areas: content, process, product, affect, and learning environment (Institutes on Academic Diversity, 2009-2012)

The American Federal law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools to serve the educational needs of eligible students with disabilities. Schools in India should also adopt this method.

As a common saying that goes, "The butterfly gains its strength from beating its wings against the chrysalis", likewise students with disability may need to struggle to find their place in formal educational settings but they will find their way out from the system that prevails at schools, including teachers, peers, and parents that shape their understanding to deal with such people because at the end every individual is bounded by a cage-like wall surrounded by various human being which in course of time also becomes the shaper and creator.

SUGGESTIVE MEASURES FOR FUTURE INTERVENTION

- There is a tier need for social worker intervention in school establishment, keeping the notion in mind that school teachers are not well equipped or trained to work with students with a disability. Social workers must bridge the gap in connecting with students with disability through a strength-based approach to improve the Self-esteem of the student. The social worker also needs to Sensitize students and teachers about different programme, policies and rights on disability.
- Generally, parents hold a large amount of the challenges in taking care of the child

therefore social workers should develop a supportive programme to reach parents who are in such situations. In many cases families with low income do not have enough financial support for treating their children, therefore, social workers must provide them with the required assistance.

- A Separate Curriculum should be constructed for students with disability to enable them for purposive learning that will meet their challenges.
- There is a need to develop an inclusive model for teachers-students participation. Necessary training, seminars and workshops for teachers on disability should also be organised.
- Each school should be employed with a counsellor and special tutors that will effectively work with students with disabilities.
- Technology can be standardized to integrate the learning of the child; studies also reveal the importance of incorporating technology and visuals as an aid for students with disabilities. Teachers need to be trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and services should be provided to students with disabilities. It should be the priority of the school.

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