



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION - A WAY TO REACH OUT SPECIAL CHILDREN: AN EXPERIMENT

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Abstract

The classroom is a laboratory for the teachers to experiment on behaviors of an individual and mould their personality. Some individuals find it harder to learn with other individuals of the same age needs to get support from their teachers, or some extra help in the schools. A few individuals have more complicated learning difficulties, and may need extra help or equipment in school to help them access an appropriate education. Owing to lack of knowledge, educational access and technology, such individuals are initially treated as unwanted and segregated from other individuals and their education is carried out in special schools. The concept of Inclusive Education has changed the outlook for the children having all those deformities and differences. To touch the emotional domain of pre service teachers, an experiment was carried out with special children. The present paper reflects the views of pre service teachers towards special children.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Pre service Teachers, Special Children*

Individual differences are always found in society. People are of different caste, creed color, disabilities and deformities are present in society. It was found that students are of lower caste, creed, having deformities and disabilities are neglected and specially disabled children are considered as a separate part of the society which has given rise to the new concept in education field Inclusive Education. Inclusive Education includes all those parts of society under one roof. Every individual is eligible to complete his/her educational needs which make them socialized being. According to the Children with Disabilities Act, children with special needs have the right to be educated with nondisabled children their own age. The Children with Disabilities Act also states that children should have access to the same general curriculum taught to students without disabilities. With this view there has been a shift towards having individual with disabilities attend the same schools as non-disabled individual. Thus each individual should be allowed to learn in his own way.

Inclusive Education

Individual with special needs should be accepted without any restrictions in all the educational programmes meant for other individual. It denotes equality, and accepts every individual with his own unique capabilities. Inclusive education denotes the ways in which the system makes itself welcoming to all individuals with special needs to get education. UNESCO (1994) states that, 'All children learn together, whatever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have.' Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuing quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities'. It promotes individual -to-individual learning. Inclusion of disabled individual means the shift in services from 'care of the disabled individual' to his 'education and personal development'. It is one step further by defining these

individual as 'Individual with special needs' who need special attention, rather than individual who are 'impaired' or 'handicapped'. Inclusive education is nothing but 'Making the programme for disabled individual as an integral part of the general educational system rather than a system within general education'.

Rationale of the Study

The idea behind inclusive education is that individual with special needs will be placed in the same classroom environment as other individual their age who do not have special needs. Within the contemporary inclusive classrooms, teachers face increased pressure as their roles diversify, compared to previous generations (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Clayton, 1996; Forlin, 1997; Long, 1995; McKinnon & Gordon, 1999; Paterson & Graham, 2000; Schloss, 1992). Teachers have varied in their responses to these challenges (Westwood & Graham, 2003). Teachers need to be more sensitive towards children with special needs. Mainstream teachers are now called upon to be sensitive to the variety of modern classrooms and to be able to rise to the challenge by adjusting their teaching styles in accordance with the multiplicity of learning styles they face (Peterson & Beloin, 1992). Their role as an inclusive educator has vital importance dealing with special children. They are further required to be psychologically and practically prepared to take on the dynamic role of inclusive educator (Mullen, 2001), while being aware that making physical provision for students with disabilities is not as important as making attitudinal changes resulting in the removal of barriers to physical and educational access (Beattie, Anderson, & Antonak, 1997). Researches show that individual with special needs thrive in standard classroom environments for a variety of different reasons. Inclusive education allows individual to develop friendships with their peers and feel less social tension about their disabilities and needs. It is believed that children who are placed in standard classroom environments generally have higher self-esteem than children who are isolated to



different classrooms simply because they have special needs. Students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms show academic gains in a number of areas, including improved performance on standardized tests, mastery of IEP goals, grades, on-task behavior and motivation to learn (National Center for Education Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995). Special children learn better if placed with normal children. Few studies reveal that children with special needs actually learn more in regular classroom environments, provided they get the help and support they need in and out of the classroom when it comes to academic subjects. Quality inclusive education doesn't just happen. Educating children with disabilities in general education settings with access to the general education curriculum requires careful planning and preparation (Deno, 1997; King-Spears, 1997; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998). Teacher education institutions if emphasize on preparation of materials and experimentation on special children will help pre-service teachers to cater to special children needs. Research shows that principals, special education directors, superintendents, teachers, parents and community members must all be involved and invested in the successful outcome of inclusive education (Villa, 1997; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Teachers - both general and special education - must collaborate to create learning strategies and environments that work for all students. Moreover results of studies on students' academic outcomes revealed that students with severe disabilities have higher levels of academic responses and lower levels of competing behaviors when they are in general education classroom settings compared with the special education setting (Mortweet, Utley, Walker, Dawson, Delquadri, Reddy, Greenwood, Hamilton, & Ledford, 1999). The need to feel included or to belong to a group is strong in most individual. Children that are relegated to special classes or schools because they have special needs may develop self-esteem and image issues that could stay with them the rest of their life. To avoid this situation of an individual the teacher training institutions should give exposure about inclusive education / Children with special needs to the pre-service teachers.

Objective of the Study

To sensitize pre-service teachers towards the challenges faced by special children

To make pre service teachers understand about the needs of special children in classroom

Research Methodology

The present study is survey cum experimental in nature. The aim of the present study is to sensitize pre service student teachers of Waymade College of Education towards the needs of Special children. The data was collected through survey method and them experiment was planned.

Sample of the Study

The sample of the present study comprised of 100 Pre-service teachers of Waymade College of Education and

100 special children of Andhjan Apangjan Vikas Mandal school, Mogri.

Tools of the Study

The researchers used following tools for the study.

- 1) Interview
- 2) Tasks and activities
- 3) Open Ended Questionnaire

Data Analysis Technique

The data was analyzed through percentage analysis and content analysis method.

Experiment: The researcher carried out survey about number of partially as well as totally blinds students, the total strength of students and their needs for co-curricular activities. The data reveals that the total strength of students were 110 in which 60% students were partially blind, 30% students were totally blind and 10% of them were physically handicapped. They were engaged throughout the day in scholastic as well as in non-scholastic activities like Cricket, Chess, Music and many more. With the given information, guidance was provided to the pre service teachers for preparation of tasks and activities such as .Songs, Games, Alphabet Recognition, Taste and Tell, Sense identification, Flavor identification, Clay modeling etc..

After preparing tasks and activities the researchers along with pre-service teachers carried out activities at the blind school (NAME). The researchers formed 10 groups of special students. Each group comprises of 10 special students along with 10 pre-service teachers. The activities were carried out and tasks were given to the students taking care of their emotions. At the end of the implementation of activities and tasks, pre service teachers interacted with the teachers of blind school and discuss about the problems and challenges they faced in the class.

The open ended questionnaire was given to collect the feedback from the pre service teachers. The responses were analyzed through percentage analysis.

Data Analysis

For the present research, questions were given to reflect over after the implementation of programme to check the reactions of pre-service teachers towards special children. The responses of pre-service teachers were collected online through mail and were analyzed by percentage analysis. The analysis is as below:

- 1) What was your fear before implementation of the activities and tasks?

60 percent pre-service teachers said that they were afraid of the behavior of special children. 30 percentage pre-service teachers were not sure about the participation of students in the activities and 10 percent pre-service teachers were confused with initiation of activities with them.

- 2) What difficulties they faced during implementation of activities and tasks?

70 percent pre service teacher said that special children were unable to follow the instructions so they have to repeat the instructions twice or thrice to make them understand. 60 percent pre-service teachers said that special children were not sharing their personal interest and also they were not ready to participate. So to convince them in participating activities and tasks was the major challenge. Even they hesitate and feel shy to mingle with new person. 40 percent pre service teacher said that they feel difficulty in understanding English language as they have not got exposure of English.

3) How was the participation of school students in activities planned by pre service teachers?

60 percent pre service teacher said that in the beginning special children were hesitated but then with the continuous efforts of pre service teachers they participated in activities and did well. They participated with full enthusiasm. 40 percent pre service teachers said that special children were very curious for some activities which are unknown to them. They also added that they were very supportive and cooperative to them.

4) How did they overcome the challenges faced during implementation?

60 percent pre service teachers tried to elevate special children mood by saying stories and jokes to them. 50 percent pre service teachers said that they took help of their peers to tackle the behavior of special children. 40 percent pre service teacher said that they gave related examples to make special children understand difficult concepts through activities and also enriched their response by showing love and care towards them. 30 percent pre service teachers followed simple to complex maxim of teaching. They started from the simple activity of rapport building and then with the complex ones.

5) What are your personal views about the visit of special children school?

Majority of pre service teachers said that it was a very wonderful experience for them to interact with those special children. They said that all teachers should be given training to understand and how to satisfy needs of special children. They developed positive attitude towards special children. They also said that physical resources should be provided to help them in academics. They said that more training programmes, workshops and seminars should be organized for pre service teachers to make them sensitize towards special children.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study revealed that pre-service teachers found the visit at the special children school and the activities carried out very fruitful. They were sensitized towards the issues of special children. They understand the problems and challenges of special children with interaction during the experiment. They also come to know about the problems of teachers faced in dealing special children. It was really a

heart touching experience for all of them.

Future Perspectives of the Study

The following are the suggestions from present study

The Teacher Education Institution should arrange visit to special schools for pre service teachers to make them aware about needs and problems of special students.

The training should be imparted to the pre-service teachers for special children.

Instructional package should be prepared with integrated Information and communication technology for effective delivery of content for special children.

A research based exercise is needed to frame and finalize nationwide curriculum of Teacher Education Programme.

Conclusion

In a nutshell it is very important to identify the needs of special children and to cater it with love and affection. To support the given statement the pre-service teachers should provided opportunities to interact with special children and develop sensitivity toward the problems and challenges of special children. This helps them in real classroom practice where they have to understand individual differences and plan their teaching learning process to cater individual differences.

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