

The Integration of Special Education Students in General Education Classrooms

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Abstract: *Background: "Inclusion can mean welcoming children with disabilities into the curriculum, environment, social interaction, and self-concept of the school" (Smith, 1998, p.18). This review paper will look at the principles of inclusion as well as its development over time. This paper will concentrate on inclusion-related difficulties in the classroom and give diverse viewpoints from those participating in the inclusion process. According to the studies presented in this review, inclusion, when implemented properly, fosters social and intellectual growth in both students in normal education and students with disabilities. Data to answer this research question was collected through a review of scholarly literature. Today's schools are grappling with a major problem: inclusiveness. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students are the groups most impacted by inclusion. Now, several schools have changed their stances on this matter and started permanently integrating disabled kids into regular education classes. But will all pupils benefit from this? Both points of view have strong advocates.*

Keywords: Inclusion, Classroom, children with disabilities

1. Introduction

According to Salend (2001, p. 5), inclusion is a "philosophy that brings students, families, educators, and community members together to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging, and community". The goal of inclusion in schools is to create cooperative, encouraging, and nurturing learning environments for students that are built around providing all students with the support and accommodations they require to learn as well as respecting and learning from one another's unique differences (Salend, 2001). Students with disabilities are not the only ones on whom inclusion is necessarily focused. It is also intended to be able to accommodate and adapt to the demands of children in normal education when properly implemented.

Diversity is described by placing all students in general education classes, regardless of their academic ability, race, linguistic proficiency, socioeconomic status, gender, preferred learning method, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, family structure, or sexual orientation, effective inclusion improves the educational system for all students. By instructing them collectively in top-notch, age-appropriate regular education classes in their local schools, inclusionary schools welcome, recognise, affirm, and celebrate the value of all learners. All students have the chance to engage in educational, social, and recreational activities as well as play and learn together. These inclusive practices cater to the needs of the person and value variety. They also encourage acceptance, equity, and collaboration.

Individual Needs: Sensitivity to and understanding of individual differences and needs are necessary for effective inclusion. Teachers cannot effectively instruct pupils without considering the characteristics that form and distinguish each individual learner. Education professionals, learners, and family members must be aware of the unique requirements and characteristics of each person since factors

including disability, race, linguistic origin, gender, and economic position interact and have an impact on academic achievement and socialisation. All pupils in inclusive classes Students are respected as unique beings who can learn and make a positive contribution to society. They are instructed to cherish variety and the similarities and distinctions among one another.

Reflective Practice: In order to effectively include all students, reflective educators must adapt their attitudes, methods for teaching and managing the classroom, and curriculum to meet the requirements of each student. Teachers in inclusive classrooms are reflective practitioners who are adaptable, sensitive, and conscious of the needs of children. They regularly evaluate their own practices for self-improvement and to make sure that all pupils' needs are satisfied while engaging in critical thought about their own values and views. All students get an individualised education from teachers that considers their requirements in terms of assessment methods, curriculum accessibility, teaching styles, technology, physical design adjustments, and a wide range of connected services. Students get challenging educational and social experiences that are appropriate for their needs and skills, as well as a curriculum that is multilevel and multimodal.

Collaboration: Successful inclusion requires the cooperation of many people, including educators, other professionals, students, families, and community organisations. In the normal education classroom, kids receive the assistance and resources they require. People collaborate and think critically while sharing resources, obligations, abilities, choices, and advocacy on behalf of the pupils. To encourage people to collaborate to meet the requirements of kids, school districts offer support, training, time, and resources to reorganize their programs.

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2. Background and Rationale for Literature Review

- 1) "Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Classrooms: Effects on Academic Achievement and Social Interaction Outcomes" by Paul T. Sindelar, et al. This study found that students with disabilities who were integrated into mainstream classrooms had higher levels of academic achievement and social interaction compared to those who were placed in separate special education classes.
- 2) The article titled "Inclusion of students with disabilities in school-based extracurricular activities: A review of literature" published in the journal *Psychology in the Schools* aims to review the existing literature on the inclusion of students with disabilities in school-based extracurricular activities. The article provides a comprehensive overview of research conducted in this area, highlighting the barriers that students with disabilities face in accessing extracurricular activities, as well as the benefits that participation in these activities can have for their social, emotional, and academic development.

Primary objective

The creation of a classroom with the least restrictive atmosphere that can suit the requirements of all students is the primary purpose of many institutions.

3. Methods

These resources came from the Internet, scholarly publications, books, and my own first-hand experiences while working as a child psychology intern. I read a wide range of materials during the research process, including the Web, research articles, and textbooks. Databases selected, access dates, keywords chosen, criteria for including articles.

Teacher's Beliefs:

According to research presented by the Dominican university of California, 'The Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in the General Education Classroom', this topic analyses the research based on the beliefs of teachers in United states and south Korea. In addition to that its purpose was to evaluate teachers' knowledge of and skill with inclusion-related teaching techniques. It also examined several methods that may aid teachers in both nations in creating inclusive classrooms that worked and to identify any potential obstacles. Both the educational systems in South Korea and the United States heavily rely on inclusion classes. The inclusion of disabled pupils in regular education classes is mandated by law in both nations. The results indicated that, although, inclusive classroom techniques are a weakness, both nations agreed that inclusive education was a critical component of today's educational system. "Most education teachers lack a suitable knowledge basis to educate usually developing pupils successfully," the teachers in South Korea agreed (Hyun Jeong et al., 2014, p. 17). The instructors added that it was challenging to build a successful inclusive classroom without having more knowledge regarding that classroom's efficacy.

Creating Inclusive Environments for Children with Autism

Inclusion in Educational Settings: Several studies have emphasized the importance of inclusive educational settings for children with autism. Research by Anderson et al. (2014) suggests that inclusive classrooms, where children with autism learn alongside their typically developing peers, can promote social interaction, communication skills, and academic achievement. The presence of trained support staff, individualized accommodations, and peer support networks are essential components of successful inclusion.

Social Skill Interventions: Interventions targeting the development of social skills in children with autism have shown promising results. A study by Kasari et al. (2012) demonstrated the effectiveness of peer-mediated interventions in promoting social engagement and communication skills in children with autism. This approach involves typically developing peers actively participating in social activities and facilitating social interactions with children with autism.

Sensory-Friendly Environments: Children with autism often experience sensory sensitivities and may benefit from sensory-friendly environments. Research by Grandin and Panek (2013) highlights the significance of environmental modifications, such as reducing sensory stimuli, providing quiet spaces, and incorporating visual supports, to create inclusive environments for children with autism. These modifications can help minimize sensory overload and support their engagement and participation.

Parent and Teacher Collaboration: Collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial in creating inclusive environments for children with autism. Research by Dunlap et al. (2010) emphasizes the importance of shared decision-making, effective communication, and parent-teacher partnerships in implementing individualized strategies and supports. This collaboration enhances consistency across home and school settings, reinforces learning, and promotes positive outcomes for children with autism.

Technology-Based Interventions: Technology-based interventions have shown promise in promoting inclusivity for children with autism. Studies by Ramdoss et al. (2011) and Parsons et al. (2014) demonstrate the effectiveness of computer-based programs and assistive technologies in enhancing communication skills, social interactions, and academic engagement in children with autism. These interventions provide individualized support, visual cues, and interactive learning opportunities.

The Downing, Morrison, and Bercin-Rascon (1996) study highlighted the academic progress made by three students with autism during their transition to inclusive settings. These students demonstrated learning in various academic skills, including letter identification, reading, writing, matching, and counting. One student, who initially had communication difficulties, eventually expressed pride in their achievements and acknowledged their improved writing and behavioural skills. Similarly, the case of Melinda, as described by Ryndak, Morrison, and Sommerstein (1999), showcases significant growth in

literacy skills experienced by a student with developmental disabilities after transitioning to an inclusive classroom. Melinda's progress exceeded expectations, with remarkable improvements in oral language, reading, and written literacy. Her growth was so remarkable that she gained the opportunity to address the Assembly in her home state and pursue a modified college program.

Advantages of inclusion for disabled children, Students Without Disabilities, and teachers:

There are several benefits to placing a disabled kid in a regular education classroom. It may usually create a more engaging atmosphere than a standard special education classroom ("Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004). This atmosphere frequently contributes to the special education student's enhanced growth and development ("What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?", 2004). According to research, children with disabilities who are placed in inclusion programmes have more engaged instructional time and are exposed to more academic activities (Salend, 2001). This engaging environment should lead to improved academic performance.

Regular education students can also serve as role models for communicative, social, and adaptive behaviours ("Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004). Regular education students can serve as role models for proper classroom behaviour and social behaviour for the special education student. Because the expectations in the normal education classroom are relatively high, this modelling frequently occurs organically. Students with disabilities are frequently segregated in the special education classroom and are not exposed to any form of acceptable student modelling.

Another benefit of inclusion for a special education student is the chance to meet new people and share new experiences ("Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004).

Inclusion can also improve a student's self-esteem and self-respect ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999). They begin to develop a feeling of self-worth when they begin to engage with normal education kids and teachers. They are pleased with themselves and their entire educational experience. They can come to perceive themselves as individuals with the same experiences and possibilities as their non-disabled classmates ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999).

Inclusion also allows normal education students to become more acquainted with their peers who have impairments ("Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004). This, in turn, should alleviate the dread and unease that normal education students frequently have in relation to their impaired peers. They can begin to acquire sensitivity to their classmates' limitations, as well as sympathetic abilities towards them ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999).

When schools practise inclusion, normal education kids can learn critical skills for their adult life. Leadership, greater capacities to help and educate others, mentorship, tutoring, self-empowerment, and higher self-esteem are examples of

these talents ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999).

It would be discriminatory to ignore the impact of inclusion on regular education instructors while debating the subject. They might be put into practising inclusion in their classroom with little notice and expected to succeed. However, research has shown that normal education instructors benefit much from inclusion. One advantage of inclusion is that it raises pupils' knowledge and acceptance of individual diversity ("Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004). Regular education instructors can start to see that all children have abilities that can be valuable and significant to their entire classroom, and these strengths can be capitalised on to provide a meaningful school experience ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999).

Another benefit of inclusion for regular education instructors is the opportunity to acquire new teaching strategies that will benefit all their pupils (Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004). The typical manner of teaching may not be acceptable for all kids with disabilities in a normal education classroom. In this scenario, inclusion enables normal education instructors to be innovative with their teaching techniques, avoid monotony, and devise novel ways of conveying material that will be acceptable for all kids in their classroom. Inclusion can also raise awareness of the significance of direct individual education for all students, which is sometimes overlooked when standard teaching techniques are used ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999).

4. Important Inclusion Strategies

The study conducted by Mackey (2014) provides valuable insights into the inclusion strategies employed by three experienced middle school teachers in their general education classrooms. The research focused on preparation, attitudes, and expectations; planning time, collaboration, and in-class supports; and instructional strategies. One notable finding is that all three teachers acknowledged that their undergraduate programs did not adequately prepare them to meet the needs of students with disabilities. They relied on their master's degrees and additional research to develop strategies for successful inclusion. The teachers emphasized the importance of obtaining Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) before the school year began, as it allowed them to make necessary accommodations and support their students effectively.

The study also highlighted the challenge of limited planning time for teachers. Although they were allocated only one hour of preparation period, the teachers dedicated extra time outside of this period to plan instruction for students with special needs. Collaboration with other teachers was valuable, although it was observed that the involvement of special education teachers and paraprofessionals in collaborative efforts was limited. Regarding instructional strategies, all three teachers recognized the benefits of predictable lesson structures for students with disabilities. They utilized various strategies such as step-by-step verbalization, demonstrations, differentiating instruction, and visual aids to enhance learning outcomes. The teachers

also created supportive environments, including designated spaces for student assistance and one-on-one or small group sessions.

The study reveals the resourcefulness and dedication of the teachers in creating inclusive classrooms. Despite the lack of comprehensive training, they actively sought out strategies and accommodations to support students with disabilities. The findings underscore the importance of professional development and collaboration opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills in inclusive education. While the study provides valuable insights, it is worth noting its limitations. The participating teachers had at least six years of experience and held master's degrees, which may have influenced their ability to implement effective inclusion strategies. Additionally, the study focused on schools that allowed time for collaboration, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to schools without such opportunities. In summary, Mackey's research contributes to our understanding of inclusion strategies employed by experienced middle school teachers. It emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation, collaboration, and the use of effective instructional strategies to promote successful inclusion in general education classrooms.

Disadvantages of inclusion in disabled children, Students Without Disabilities and teachers.

On the other hand, many people believe that inclusion does more harm than benefit for all parties involved. Opponents of inclusion see it as a strategy based on unreasonable expectations in which schools attempt to mould all children into the mould of normal education ("Special Education Inclusion", 2001). According to the research, when inclusion is not executed properly, it can have a wide range of negative consequences for people engaged.

One downside of inclusion for students with disabilities is that the socialisation component of their education frequently takes precedence over the academic component ("Education Integration", 1998). Opponents of inclusion believe that socialisation cannot be the primary purpose of education for children with disabilities without also teaching them academics ("Education Integration", 1998). Many inclusion initiatives are centred on students with disabilities sitting in regular education classrooms and seeming normal, whether or not they are participating in the educational programme ("Education Integration", 1998). This can be damaging to children's academic progress, since many critical skills are not taught simply to keep the student physically present in the normal education classroom.

One downside of inclusion for regular education students is that an inclusive classroom is usually more dynamic than a non-inclusive classroom, which some regular education students find disruptive to their own learning ("Preparing for Inclusion", 2004). The addition of one or more lead teachers, special education aides, students with disabilities coming in and out of the classroom for various reasons, or students with disabilities making involuntary vocalisations as a result of their disability are all factors that could make an inclusive classroom distracting for regular education students. Many opponents of inclusion believe that it is unfair to jeopardise the academics of the entire normal education class for the

sake of one or two special education children ("Preparing for Inclusion", 2004).

The second downside of inclusion for normal education students is that it might foster animosity between regular education and special education students ("Preparing for Inclusion", 2004). Regular education students frequently observe the amount of special instruction or one-on-one attention that students with disabilities receive and ask why they do not receive the same level of attention. Regular education students may notice that students with impairments have reduced assignments and assessments, or that their burden is less than theirs. All of this might breed envy and animosity towards their colleagues with impairments. As a result, regular education students may tease and harass children with impairments, and any beneficial outcomes may be hampered.

As previously said, incorporating inclusion into schools has a significant influence on regular education instructors. "Inclusion without resources, support, teacher preparation time, commitment, a vision statement, restructuring, and staff development will not work" for regular education instructors ("What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?", 2004). The continual idea of anxiety is the primary drawback of inclusion for regular education instructors (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004).

Because fear is the prevailing emotion, many regular education instructors are afraid that they will fail to implement inclusion properly and correctly in their classroom. They understand that they are accountable for all of the children in their classroom and that they may lack the necessary training to educate and interact with students with disabilities. These anxieties frequently lead to a negative attitude towards inclusion, students with disabilities, and teachers' skills and competence level (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004).

Another downside of inclusion for regular education instructors is their reluctance to relinquish control of their classroom. Many regular education instructors rapidly realise that if inclusion is to be effective, they will not be able to accomplish it on their own. Many regular education instructors, however, are hesitant to confess that they do not have all of the answers and do not feel comfortable delegating any degree of responsibility to another teacher in their own classroom (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004). Many opponents of inclusion believe that normal education instructors should not have to change their practises in order to accommodate the requirements of a few children or share control of their classroom with anybody.

Questions left to answer:

The integration of special education students in general education classrooms has made significant strides, but there are still several important questions that remain unanswered. One such question pertains to the effectiveness of instructional strategies. Researchers seek to determine how instructional approaches can be tailored to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. They aim to identify evidence-based practices

and interventions that can be implemented to ensure optimal learning outcomes for all students.

Another area of inquiry revolves around teacher preparation and professional development. Educators require appropriate training and ongoing professional development opportunities to effectively support students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Researchers explore the types of training and support that are necessary to equip general education teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

Collaboration and co-teaching models are also under scrutiny. Researchers strive to identify the most effective models of collaboration between general education and special education teachers. They seek to understand how collaborative efforts can be strengthened to provide seamless support for students with disabilities while maintaining high academic standards for all students.

The impact of inclusive education on the social and emotional well-being of students is another important aspect. Researchers examine how inclusive education influences the social interactions and emotional development of students with disabilities and their peers. They explore strategies to foster positive peer relationships, acceptance, and inclusion within the classroom and school community.

Assessment and evaluation practices in inclusive classrooms are also an area of interest. Researchers aim to determine appropriate and fair assessment methods that accurately measure the progress and achievements of students with disabilities. They also explore how individualized education plans (IEPs) and accommodations can be effectively implemented to support students during assessments.

The role of parental involvement in inclusive education is another aspect under examination. Researchers investigate the ways in which parents can actively participate in the inclusion of their child with disabilities in general education classrooms. They explore strategies for involving parents in decision-making processes and forming meaningful partnerships to support their child's educational journey.

Long-term outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms are also of concern. Researchers aim to understand the long-term academic, social, and vocational outcomes for students who have been included in general education settings. They examine how inclusive education impacts post-school transitions, employment opportunities, and the overall quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Addressing these unanswered questions through continued research and exploration will contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of inclusive education practices. By gaining further insights, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work together to create more inclusive learning environments that meet the diverse needs of all students and promote their academic, social, and emotional growth.

5. Summary

Creating inclusive environments for children with autism requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses inclusive educational settings, social skill interventions, sensory-friendly environments, parent-teacher collaboration, and the use of technology-based interventions. By implementing these strategies, educators, parents, and professionals can support the development, well-being, and inclusion of children with autism, fostering their overall success and quality of life.

Inclusion is a contentious and sensitive issue in education. Inclusion continues to elicit conflicting emotions from special educators, general educators, and administrators. Their attitudes are linked to the effectiveness of an inclusionary programme. This success, in turn, is based on administrative support, sufficient resources, the time to plan and prepare, and suitable training to implement a successful inclusion programme in their school. When an effective inclusion programme is implemented in a school, research has shown that both students with disabilities and regular education students gain greatly. These advantages can last well beyond their school years and have been proved to have a significant impact on students' adult lives.

However, when an inclusion programme is implemented without the necessary resources and training, research has shown that both students with disabilities and normal education students might suffer. When this occurs, many students and professionals participating in the inclusion programme tend to have a gloomy perspective of inclusion and become far less eager to put out a true effort to make it succeed. Several reasons have contributed to the present trend of schools advocating inclusive education. Legislation, the civil rights struggle, normalisation, technical advancements, and educational reform are a few of these reasons. These characteristics have led school officials to believe that pupils may study alongside one another while still pursuing diverse educational goals. These elements have demonstrated the importance of allowing all children to engage with one another, form friendships, and share common educational experiences. It is worth noting that the inclusive education movement acknowledges that inclusion may not be appropriate for all pupils. Forcing these pupils to fit into the inclusion mould is as harmful and unjust to them as exclusion was years ago.

The influence of inclusiveness continues to provide a diversity of viewpoints. The principles of inclusion, differing ideas on how inclusion should be implemented. Some of the issues surrounding inclusion were covered in the previous two chapters. While special educators, normal educators, and administrators will continue to have differing perspectives on inclusion, the researcher discovered that the social and academic success of all kids remains the top goal in our schools.

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