

BARRIERS OF INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A VOICE FROM REGULAR CLASS ROOMS

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Abstract

Higher education policies of our country always raises the deep need and concern for including physically mentally and socially deprived sections of the society. Nothing could be fostered without analyzing the practical constraints that hinders this endeavor. This paper is intended specially to highlight the contradicting perceptions regarding the inclusion of differentially able children. Inclusion is noteworthy as it is highly beneficial for developing the self-esteem of students with learning disabilities but, still it is problematic due to the garden variety of confusions associated with it. Investigators analyzed various hindrances on the way of implementing inclusion programs like lack of training of general teacher to handle disables, unaware of behavioral problems, negative attitude of educators and administrators, inaccessibility of students assistive technology devices,, reluctance of teachers to handle disable learners, lack of proper communication.

Introduction

The prime quest of this submission is to have an analysis on the different versions and approaches on the inclusion practices that currently attracted to policy makers and academic administrators in dealing with the children with disability. Students who have behavioral and psychological problems need special treatment or intervention in education. Their problem is often called "disorders," which are sources of stress for students and their families, schools, and communities (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association, 2004). Also referred to as mental health disorders (SAMHA, 2004), the condition is said to be caused by biology, environment, or a combination of the two. Examples of biological factors are genetics, chemical imbalances in the body, and damage to the central nervous system, such as a head injury. Many environmental factors also can affect mental health, including exposure to violence, extreme stress, and the loss of an important person (SAMHA, 2004). Basically, pupils with behavioral problems demonstrate behavior that is noticeably different from that expected in institutions or the community and are in need of remediation. Inclusion is basically the philosophy of confining a special student only within the general classroom setting. It is believed that through this process, disability students will have more opportunity to make friends, get along with other students, and develop cognitive skills and self-esteem better. Through this, disability students will not feel they are being isolated, but instead, will feel accepted for what they are. But the concept of inclusion also has many critics that question its effectiveness.

Include the Exclude: A Slogan for Equity

According to the Center for Mental Health Schools (1998) in California University, the term inclusion denotes to the practice of educating pupils who have disabilities in classes along with their peers who do not have disabilities. Inclusion implies that students are needed to be taught outside the regular education classroom only when all available methods have been tried and failed to meet their needs (Bateman and Bateman, 2002). It is a movement that seeks to create educational institutions and other social institutions based on meeting the needs of all learners as well as respecting and learning from each other's differences (Salend, 1998). This means that the special students have the right to be educated in a general setting classroom given that a specific teaching method or approach works for him or her. Rudd (2002) emphasized that inclusion is not to be called inclusions when there is no supports and services given to special students to help them to cope with the general classroom setting. It does not also cut back special services and does not assume that the entire student in the general classroom setting should learn in the same way (Rudd, 2002).

Why Inclusion?

A retrieval of the different theoretical explanations and observations made through analyzing literature available has projected the following merits for the slogan of inclusion as a strategy.

- ✘ Burnette (1996) argues that Students with disabilities in this setting can develop better social development, better social interaction, enhanced skill acquisition and generalization, better health, more independence, greater success in meeting the objectives of their IEPs, and more normalized functioning.
- ✘ The Florida Children's Forum, 2002 argues that through inclusion, learner can develop friendships and learn how to play and interact with one another. They can also develop a more positive image of themselves and a healthy attitude about the uniqueness of other (The Florida Children's Forum, 2002).
- ✘ The families of the students with disabilities can also benefit from inclusion because through it, they will have the opportunity to learn more about child development. They will not only have access to child care, but they will also have the opportunity to teach their students about individual differences and diversity. For child care professionals, it can also be advantageous because through inclusion, they will have the opportunity to learn about and develop partnerships with other community resources and agencies. They can also build strong relationships with parents and enhance their credibility as quality, inclusive child care providers (The Florida Children's Forum, 2002).
- ✘ Inclusion can help students with disabilities reduce their fear of human differences. This is accompanied by increased comfort and awareness, growth in social cognition, improvement in self-concepts, development of personal principles, and warm and caring attitude toward peers and friends. (Lipsky and Gartner 1997).
- ✘ Students with medium to severe disabilities can develop academic increases, and behavioral and social progress through inclusion. Accordingly, it is not recommendable to segregate these students because in segregated sites, they do not receive a greater concentration of special education resources, degrading their traditional skills domain and social competence learning (Moore et al 1998).
- ✘ Demonstrate increased acceptance and appreciation of diversity; develop better communication and social skills; show better development in moral and ethical principles; create warm and caring friendship; and demonstrate increased self-esteem. (The National Association for the Education of Young Students, 1997).
- ✘ Inclusion of students in general classroom settings produces positive outcomes. Parents and teachers are supportive of such program and a wide range of curricula are being used to make sure they are really effective for students with disabilities. (Odum et al 1999).
- ✘ Inclusion can be an advantage because it gives and ensures students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum, an important consideration in recent IDEA amendments (Council for Exceptional Children, 1998).
- ✘ Further more, inclusion can also provide opportunities for expanding social networks and forming new friendships (Scruggs, 2001).

Barriers in Inclusive Education

Though educationist glorify the practice of including the psychologically excluded sections several obstacles had been identified that may prevent a successful implementation of inclusion in regular classrooms of students with disabilities. The subsequent proposition of this paper tries to reveal some of the prominent observations adopting an analysis of literature reviewed. Major barriers are that general classroom teachers may be unpreparedness from the part of teachers in experiencing a special student. Ritter (1995) cited that regular classroom teachers rated behavior as more problematic than did special education teachers.

Various sources suggest that barriers between general and special education are problematic in a sense that it affects the attention that should be given to behavioral problems of students. Some of the greatest barriers associated with inclusion education are negative attitudes. As with society in general, these attitudes and stereotypes are often caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding. The attitudes and abilities of general education teachers in particular can be major limitations in inclusive education. Training teachers to understand and work with children with disabilities is often inadequate, or it may be fragmented and uncoordinated. Some institutions are still inaccessible to students in special devices or other aides for needy learners. Classrooms must be able to accommodate a student's assistive technology devices, as well as other furniture to meet individual needs. General educators does not willing to work with inclusion specialists to make modifications and accommodations in both teaching methods and classroom and homework assignments. Teachers should be

flexible in how students learn and demonstrate knowledge and understanding. One of the barriers associated with inclusion education is a lack of communication among administrators, teachers, specialists, staff, parents, and students. Open communication and coordinated planning between general education teachers and special education staff are essential for inclusion to work. Time is needed for teachers and specialists to meet and create well-constructed plans to identify and implement modifications, accommodations, and specific goals for individual students. Collaboration must also exist among teachers, staff, and parents to meet a student's needs and facilitate learning at home (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2008). The findings in Schumm and Vaughn's (1992) that most general education teachers do not give much focus on behavioral problems contrary to special education setting. They are willing to make adaptations while the student is taking tests or working on assignments (i.e., interactive planning), but are less likely to spend much time planning or making adaptations to the curriculum or test (preplanning) or constructing new objectives based on student performance (post planning).

Numerous middle and high school teachers are unaware when they have a mainstreamed learner and rarely use the IEP or psychological reports in their planning. Because of the lack of psychological planning, general classroom teachers need assistance in planning for mainstreamed learners, and they are likely to seek the help of the special education teacher, reading resource teacher, or fellow teachers.

In the study conducted by Trump and Hange (1996), found that discrepancy that may emerge between the academic and social development of special education students and regular education students as they progress through grade levels; special education students are endangered of becoming overly dependent to teachers and peers; special educator should also be a consultant; increasing needs of less-academically talented students who do not qualify for special education service; instructional aides may not be used appropriately; difficulty of including students with behavioral issues and assessment issues.

Trump and Hange, (1996) attributed resistance to change on the part of administrators, teachers and parents; role confusion; lack of administrative support; lack of planning; lack of adequate personnel; and lack of funding as the major barrier for inclusion of the mentally disadvantaged students with the mainstreamers.

Lambert et al, (2005) further more explained this stating that general education teachers are not competent in modifying and adapting their curricula and instructional practices to satisfy the needy learners. So students with special needs will continue to be at a distinct educational disadvantage.

The attitude of general education teachers toward inclusion that least positive responses on "feasibility of teaching a wide range of students in one classroom" and the "skill of the general educator to teach a variety of students". General education practitioners are becoming less and less doubtful towards inclusion (Lambert et al, 2005).

Teachers and staff express concern and frustration over the amount time involved in collaborative planning, developing curriculum modifications and orchestrating social interactions. School staffs are also anxious about their level of knowledge about inclusion. (McLaughlin et al, 1996).

Potential barrier in the implementation of inclusion policies is its cost. Increased costs are reported in areas such as personnel, professional development and renovating institution buildings (McLaughlin et al, 1996).

There were concerns about adequate staffing of professionals needed in the implementation of inclusion. (Appalachia Educational Lab, 1996). Some states continue to segregate disabled from non-disabled students. That prevents the effective implementation and acceptance of inclusion. The barriers mentioned are the following: categorization of students by labels, classroom and curriculum limits their educational outcome; persons with severe disabilities are disproportionately placed in segregated special education programs, classrooms and facilities; poor and minority students with disabilities are disproportionately placed in more restrictive programs and settings (Boundy, 1996). Inclusion in classroom is not linked with inclusion in the community, opportunities, housing, transportation and employment; and limited role models for students with disabilities because of discrimination in employment. (Boundy, 1996).

People are still unsure students with disabilities; the special students require extra time with the teacher, which may affect the balance of time that should be given to typical students (Smith and Rapport, 1999). Many institutions follow "one-size, fits all" approach; it does not have positive outcomes for non-disabled students, special education students need specialized services that can only be provided out of the regular classroom; the

minority students disproportionately placed in special education are there voluntarily; only ideological professionals and few parents advocate inclusion. (The City University of New York, 1996). The attitude problem pointed out that is the belief of educators that there are "some" students that cannot learn. They argued that students with disabilities, although have different mental capacities, also have things that they are able to learn. It is the people who encounter those students who put the limitations and not the students themselves (Evans et al, 1998).

The lack of resources allocated to the development of inclusion programs instead of allocating funds for students with special needs, the government or the institution might as well allocate funds to general education budget and there is a need to improve the screening and assessment techniques to improve every child's need (Evans et al, 1998). State directors were reluctant that their state practices full inclusion and they have differing views regarding policies on inclusion implementation. This shows the need to educate state directors more about the policies of inclusion implementation. (Top, 1996). The parents of students in the inclusion classes expressed a higher degree of concern with their student's education programs. This shows that parents are more anxious in this setting on whether their students will do well with academics or get along well with classmates. The teachers and students in inclusion class more instances of behavior problems. Students also experience gains in reading scores with no noteworthy differences for mathematics, language, and spelling. Finally, they found that special students in inclusion classes lower levels of self-esteem (Daniel and King, 2003).

Conclusion

The analysis of the above empirical observations and assumptions reflected the contradicting perceptions toward the practice of inclusion. On one side, inclusion is a practice that should be implemented on every institution because of its advantages such as enhancing the self-esteem of students with disabilities as well as helping them improve their cognitive skills and helping them learn how to socialize. On the other, inclusion is problematic program to implement because of the confusions that are associated with the practice. Inclusion is seen as a program that is poorly measured in terms of its true effects to students with disabilities. It is also being criticized for the lack of capability of general teachers to handle students with disabilities in their regular classes.

While there is great contradiction on inclusion believes, the practice still has a potential to be proven effective considering that studies about its effectiveness with positive results will increase. Currently, inclusion is not being taken seriously mainly because of its complexity as a practice and as a philosophy. However, several studies like those cited here shows that there is a possibility for an international acceptance and legalization of inclusion practices. Also, proponents of inclusion should address quickly the issues that may ruin the credibility of its practice. Requirements for an effective practice of inclusion should be constantly monitored, tested and implemented. There should also be programs to educate stakeholders such as state special education directors, principals, teachers, parents and students about the what inclusion really means and the means for effective practice. Proponents of inclusion should aim to conquer confusion regarding its practice and they should start by developing a comprehensive framework for an effective program.

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