

Inclusive Education and Parental Involvement in Integration of children with disability/disabilities in mainstream school: A Literature Review

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I. INTRODUCTION

Parent involvement continues to be the focus of much academic research, policy formation, and public debate. The role that parental involvement plays in the academic performance of children has been a subject of keen interest to educators for at least the past four decades.

For a long time, children with disabilities were educated in separate classes or in separate schools. People got used to the idea that special education meant separate education. However, research has recognised the value of parental involvement in enhancing the academic achievement, self-esteem, and transition from school to community of students with special education needs. So, when children are educated together, positive academic and social outcomes occur for all the children involved.

In western countries, the right of parental participation in the education process of their children with disabilities has been safeguarded in legislation since the 1970s, for example, in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which was the forerunner of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States [1], and in the Education Acts of the United Kingdom [2]. Parental roles have been evolving from volunteer fund-raisers, passive recipients of information to active advocates and collaborators.

The fact that inclusion is about providing the help children need to learn and participate in meaningful ways. In the last 30 years there has been a fundamental shift in India in the education of children with special educational needs away from segregated provision towards a more inclusive approach.

Definitions of Terms Inclusive education

Inclusive Education is the provision of services to students with disabilities in their neighbourhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. It is the system in which all children from a given community learn together in the same local school including children with learning difficulties, special need or disabilities. It involves all children learning together with peers in the society from a very beginning. Provision of such a form of education inculcates the feeling of confidence in the minds of disabled children and offers them access to formal system of education. Proper education generally enables a disabled child to overcome his disabilities and make him a useful citizen. It is a process that runs in two directions, to prepare the disabled person to become the part of society and to prepare the society, to accept them. [3].

Integration

Integration refers to the process of providing extra support for students with special needs so that they can participate in the mainstream curriculum, but there is not significant change in the content or delivery of the programme. It differs from inclusion which refers to the process of introducing significant changes to the mainstream programme in terms of organisation, content and mode of delivery with an aim to meet the diversity of learning needs of their students

Parental involvement /parental participation?

Parental involvement is the participation of Parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood, recognizing that parents are the primary influence in children's lives.

Integration

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Past research on parent involvement and children's academic skills is mixed (Fan & Chen, 2001). Some studies have found no significant association between parent involvement and academic achievement [4] and a few have even detected negative associations. Yet, positive associations between parent involvement and academic achievement have been demonstrated repeatedly in the literature. A recent meta-analysis by Fan and Chen [5] finds moderate associations between parent involvement and an array of learning-related or academic skills, such as achievement motivation, task-persistence, and receptive vocabulary, during preschool and kindergarten. With a predominant research focus on parent involvement and achievement in either preschool and kindergarten or high school, the potentially supportive role of parent involvement during middle childhood remains understudied.

The empirical branch of work in this area was summarized first by the metanalytic work conducted by Fan and Chen (2001). Fan and Chen (2001) finds moderate associations between parent involvement and an array of learning-related or academic skills, such as achievement motivation, task-persistence, and receptive vocabulary, during preschool and kindergarten. With a predominant research focus on parent involvement and achievement in either preschool and kindergarten or high school, the potentially supportive role of parent involvement during middle childhood remains understudied. These researchers canvassed the field and noted the scarcity of empirical studies on parental involvement. The vast literature they reviewed consisted mainly of theoretical pieces emphasizing its importance and calling for interventions on the part of schools, even before a clear understanding of the empirical nature of this relationship had been established. Fan and Chen (2001) yielded an important benchmark for empirical work in this area and established an operational definition of parental involvement.

Two research studies regarding parental involvement were undertaken, one in special school by fan [6], and another in mainstream schools by chen [7]

Findings of both studies indicated that parents tended not to be actively involved in the educational process of their children with special education needs. Much work is expected to be done to enhance parent-school collaboration.

In another work on inclusive education (Kaur, 2016) that highlighted the role of family, parents and school in an inclusive education. The researcher emphasized the fact of "Education for all". 'The parents, family and traditional and informal system of education are essential for the educational inclusion of all children.' [8]

Parents and schools are partners in the education of children because schools are a formalized extension of the family. [11]

Reviews from the literature consistently support the contention that parental involvement would promote children's achievement from pre-school through secondary education. This phenomenon is also true for parents whose children have special education needs like specific learning difficulties, behavioural problems, or physical disabilities as they need to pay additional efforts when their children are integrated in mainstream schools. Parents would have to collaborate with school teachers in different ways to support their children such as attending case conferences and helping to implement individualized educational plans (I.E.P.) for their children at home and giving various kinds of support including material and emotional ones. Their involvement is based on the recognition that parents are experts on the needs of their children, and they can be effective educators. Hence, parents play an indispensable and complementary role in the education process of their children.

In many countries like the United States and Britain, the roles of parents with disabled children have been evolving from being the recipients of information to being the active decision-makers for the education of their children

In another study on integrated education in Hong Kong, Wong and her associates (1999) reflected the views and experiences of parents whose special needs children were informally integrated in mainstream schools without joining the Integrated Education programme. Although most parents supported integrated education, they complained that the present system did not make much accommodation for the needs of their children. Instead, parents have to work out coping strategies for their children in fitting into the ordinary schools. Moreover, parents frequently encountered difficulties in building a collaborative relationship with mainstream schools. Parents noted that they were not perceived as having a right to negotiate with schools and they would not take a strong stance against the policies practised by mainstream schools for fear of causing some adverse impacts on their children. Strengthening communication with school teachers was one of the recommendations voiced by these parents. Wong also made the following concluding remarks, "the concept of integration has to be extended to parents and schools so that parents are no longer treated as adversaries, rival

and inferiors, but accepted as partners in a joint enterprise” (Wong et al., 1999, P.787). She advocated the need to incorporate the consumer’s perspective in the development of appropriate models in integrated education in Hong Kong.

It is now widely acknowledged that to achieve the goal of universal education in India and in order to fulfil provisions laid out in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2009) the education of children with disabilities cannot be put on the back burner. Inclusion or the education of children with disabilities in regular classrooms must be adopted both as an ideology and as a practical solution to support the Education for All adage, and to bring about equity in education in India. [10]

To conclude, all the above studies highlighted the importance of parental involvement in integrated education, regardless of whether these special needs students are integrated formally or informally in mainstream schools. Moreover, will there be difference in the roles of parents and their degree of involvement in schools under the Integrated Education (I.E). programme and in schools without joining the programme? Henceforth, it is worth undertaking a more comprehensive study in the degree of parental involvement when integrated education programme is receiving an impetus at present.

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