



Review Of Literature On Developmental Profile Of Children With Special Needs In Integrated And Special Schools

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ABSTRACT: Education is a powerful instrument of social change, and often initiates upward movement in the social structure. Thereby, helping to bridge the gap between the different sections of society. The educational scene in the country has undergone major change over the years, resulting in better provision of education and better educational practices. In 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) published a comprehensive report called the Sergeant Report on the post-war educational development of the country. As per the report, provisions for the education of the handicapped, were to form an essential part of the national system of education, which was to be administered by the Education Department. According to this report, handicapped children were to be sent to special schools only when the nature and extent of their defects made this necessary. The Kothari Commission (1964–66), the first education commission of independent India, observed: “the education of the handicapped children should be an inseparable part of the education system.” The commission recommended experimentation with integrated programmes in order to bring as many children as possible into these programmes (Alur, 2002).

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INTRODUCTION

Like many other countries, Ireland’s system of education has continually evolved over the years, and from the early 1950s a separate, segregated system of schooling for pupils classified as ‘handicapped’ was established. Pupils were excluded from regular school settings and sent away to special schools or institutions, which were justified by the pooling of resources and on-site access to therapy and specialised services. This parallel special school system was supported by the Report of Enquiry on Mental Handicap (Government of Ireland, 1965), which recommended that special education for mildly handicapped pupils should be provided mainly in special schools both day and residential rather” (Hofstede, 2001:9). This former definition holds that individual values are the core of a national culture and it is this definition that will be utilised for further analysis and discussion in this study. In acknowledging the difficulty in changing culture, Hofstede argues that actions and behaviours rarely changing, making individual and societal values an important aspect of culture. These values can be argued as being “the basis of concepts of right and

wrong, of high quality and low quality, of what's preferred and what is rejected" (Petrie, 1994:60) There is broad agreement in the literature that social values are found within individuals, although they are influenced by many internal and external factors, such as family patterns, religion, political or social systems, and training. Therefore, in order to properly understand the effect that society has on the attitudes and behaviours of people, it is necessary to understand society itself and the individuals that make up that society (Petrie, 1994). Petrie also investigates that the ways in which personal values are affected by the mass media, which is an important factor in modern cross-cultural interactions and is therefore likely to be important in the development of values. However, it should also be recognised that the process of changing values and norms in society is normally quite slow, perhaps because the values are passed between generations and are therefore programmed into individuals. State power can also be an important part of this, with state philosophy being able to manipulate the values of people within a society over a long period of time through the introduction of new rules and regulations. An

illustration of this is in the changes in power in Eastern Europe in the last few decades. The move from strict to increasingly liberal political systems has resulted in changes to the common norms and values of the people living in these countries. This may have been partially due to the influence of Western European states, in which individuals have traditionally been given more freedom to express their beliefs, culture and traditions. For example, in many Western countries, people are free to open both churches and mosques. The issue of religion is another important factor in the culture of a society, with religion shaping the accepted rules and behaviour of society since the earliest periods of history.

Review of literature

Indeed, inclusion illustrates an almost perfect educational system. However, is there any proof that these aims were successfully attained? Several tests and research have been done to answer this inquiry. A number of studies deal with the inclusion of children with certain disabilities in general education classrooms. A previous study of three preschoolers with profound disabilities (Hanline, 1993) established the social and communication benefits of full inclusion for these children. The results of this study conflicted with previous studies of preschool children with disabilities who seemed to be socially isolated in general classrooms (Peterson & Haralick, 1977; Peterson, 1982; Faught, Balleweg, Crow, & van den Pol, 1983).

A further study (Cole, 1991) examined social integration of children with disabilities in 43 Minnesota classrooms. The 2-year study compared integrated and segregated (special education only) sites and determined that developmental skill progress was similar in both types of schools, but that children in integrated sites progressed in social skill development while the segregated children actually regressed. While social skill development may vary based on numerous results of previous studies, inclusion is capable of enhancing children's academic achievement through speech and language programs, improved parent-teacher communication, greater use of group work, a student participation in class discussions, and increased community acceptance of people with disabilities (Jenkinson, 1997, p. 155).

Students at mainstream schools were more likely to have higher academic achievements than those at special schools, even when developmental level was similar. Against these benefits, inclusion also brought its share of challenges. From the evidence set by Jenkinson, in his survey, she said

that some focus group participants felt that students with disabilities are receiving too much attention and concerns with inadequate resource provision for these special students meant that students without disabilities were missing out on the attention and encouragement they needed. Evidence indicates that nearly all children with physical and sensory difficulties, including children with no other impairments should be educated at mainstream school but it is important not to overlook their emotional and social needs (and in some cases medical or personal needs). Success or the ease of inclusion shouldn't be decided on the basis of who requires the least fuss needed to monitor emotional and social well being.

While there were several studies showing the negative insights of educators towards inclusive schooling, contradictory findings have also been reported. For instance, a study conducted by Villa et al. (1996) provided results that favored the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools. The researchers noted that teacher commitment often emerges at the end of the implementation cycle, after the teachers have gained mastery of the professional expertise needed to implement inclusive programs. Similar findings were reported by LeRoy and Simpson (1996), who studied the impact of inclusion over a 3-year period in the state of Michigan. Their study showed that as teachers' experience with children with SEN increased, their confidence to teach these children also increased. The evidence seems to indicate that teachers' negative or neutral attitudes at the beginning of an innovation such as inclusive education may change over time as a function of experience and the expertise that develops through the process of implementation. Research has suggested that, although teachers' attitudes can be affected by several interacting factors, one of the most important is the level and nature of support that they receive. Based on this assumption, Clough and Lindsay (1991), referring to the UK context, have argued that there might be variations in teachers' attitudes within the UK, reflecting the levels and history of support in each Local Education Authority (LEA). Indeed, LEAs vary in the provision they make to schools either directly through staffing and capitation, or through support services (such as special needs support teachers, educational psychologists) and this is likely to affect teachers' attitudes. Moreover, some authorities have promoted inclusive education (Bannister et al. 1998; Lindsay et al. 1990), while in others the pace of change has been slow. Despite the disparity among research results and the overwhelming number of variables associated with establishing success with inclusion, the call for full

inclusion of all students into general education schools and for most students into general education classrooms continues (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992).

In addition, there are different levels of support available, related to the strengths and weaknesses of individuals with mental disabilities, varying from 'intermittent' to 'pervasive'. 'Intermittent support', either high or low intensity, occurs during transition periods in a person's life, such as job loss or health crisis. 'Limited support' occurs on a regular basis for a short period of time, but the nature of support tends to be more intensive than in intermittent support. 'Extensive support' occurs on a daily basis in home, school or work, often over a long time. 'Pervasive support' is the most intense and is provided in home, school and/or work over the course of the individual's life (Wehmeyer, 2003). However, on the definition of mental retardation used by the AAMR (2002): "Mental retardation a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18" (Lukasson et al., 2002: 8). This definition includes three core elements of (a) significant limitations in intellectual functioning, which refers to the individual's ability to think, plan, solve problems faced in everyday life, understand complex ideas and learn quickly, all of which involve a degree of intelligence that can be inferred from the results of intelligence tests; (b) significant limitations in adaptive behaviour, which includes conceptual skills in receptive and expressive language, the ability to read and write, social skills and scientific skills that are embodied in the personal activities of daily life such as eating and drinking habits, and the ability to move safely in all environments where the individual lives, and (c) onset through the developmental period. These were the most prominent elements in the definition of the American Association on Mental Retardation in 1992 and 2002 (AAMR, 2002).

Many authors acknowledge that pre-service teacher education cannot prepare teachers for every challenge that they may meet in their careers, and so teacher education needs to be perceived as a life-long process of professional development (Rouse, 2012, p. xviii). Indeed, many of the more successful approaches to educating teachers for inclusion are at the in-service stage, when teachers have some experience of teaching, and have real life challenges and children to work with. The Kyrgyzstan programme mentioned above is one such example (Djumagulova, 2006, pp.8-9), as is the work in northern Zambia, where primary school teachers

were involved in participatory action research and documenting their experiences of making their schools more inclusive (Kaplan, 2006). This evolved into the teachers producing a collection of reflective accounts (with publishing support from EENET) which they considered akin to their own inclusion manual; new teachers joining their schools were required to familiarise themselves with the action research process and documented results.

Mittler (2012) argues that the provision of support and services, as indicated in the UNCRPD (2006), is a key factor for the development of an inclusive society. Nevertheless, he notes that people with disabilities are still experiencing barriers in accessing services and resources. In general, without effective services, even the most innovative forms of curriculum and instruction are deemed to fail (Giangreco et al., 2012). Reyes (2011) argues that the provision of support is a fundamental part in the exercise of human rights for people with disabilities. He divides human rights into first-, second- and third-generation. The first generation refers to basic rights, such as freedom of movement, that cannot be exercised unless people with disabilities are guaranteed third-generation rights, such as the right to basic equipment (e.g. wheelchair), and access to trained personnel (e.g. rehabilitation professionals). Reyes positions education as a second-generation human right which requires support, assistant personnel and resources, depending on the type of impairment. Reyes further suggests that states must enshrine the right to support services in positive human-rights norms (i.e. according to laws set down in legal documents) in order to put people with disabilities in a position to exercise their rights.

The INCLUD-ED reports (European Commission, 2007; 2009) also suggests that closer collaboration between education, social work and health departments is needed for the assessment of learners with disabilities. In a study of inter-organisational linkages, Farmakopoulou (2002) indicates that collaborative structures need to be related to wider economic, political and social forces. Farmakopoulou also stresses the importance of taking into account the issue of power relations. The asymmetry of exchange relationships, especially with regard to resource allocation between educational personnel and social workers for example, may create conflicts and disagreements to the detriment of learners with disabilities. In her research on multi-professional working and its impact on the education of learners with disabilities, Soan (2012) draws an interesting picture of the most commonly used terminology in this area and how it reflects differences in the approaches used to deliver services to support learners with disabilities. First of

all, she indicates that there has been a shift from words such as ‘multi-agency’ and ‘multi-disciplinary’, where the emphasis was on different adults working together to support learners (but on a separate basis), to words such as ‘inter-disciplinary’ and ‘inter-agency’, where the different adults start to work across boundaries and professions. Finally, words such as ‘trans-agency’ and ‘transdisciplinary’ (Soan, 2012) have begun to be used to show how different services are working across disciplines to respond to learners with disabilities in a holistic way.

Until the 1970s, the policy encouraged segregation. Most educators believed that children with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities were so different that they could not participate in the activities of a common school (Advani, 2002). Christian missionaries, in the 1880s, started schools for the disabled as charitable undertakings (Mehta, 1982). The first school for the blind was established in 1887. An institute for the deaf and mute, was set up in 1888. Services for the physically disabled were also initiated in the middle of the twentieth century. Individuals with mental retardation were the last to receive attention. The first school for the mentally challenged being established in 1934 (Mishra, 2000). Special education programmes in earlier times were, therefore, heavily dependent on voluntary initiative.

The provision of resources and the involvement of the community in identification and intervention in the child’s own milieu need emphasis and focus. The benefits of existing knowledge and skills in conjunction with technology can be made to reach the needy through the involvement of local bodies. For example, the Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH) has played the role of a catalyst at Badlapur Kulgaon Nagar Palika where the Town Panchayat has resolved to collect Rs 10 per property per year to help persons with disabilities. As a result, the Town Panchayat collects about Rs 2,25,000 per year through its 22,500 properties. An Apang Samiti, consisting of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) schools, banks, station masters, post masters, etc. was formed which decides the priorities of the PWDs, including Children with SEN. Empowering the Town Panchayat through a catalyst can be critical for the success of the Early Identification and Intervention Programme. A strong parent/caregiver professional partnership should be developed for the networking and strengthening of intervention programmes (Mulharah, 2003).

An extensive review of research on learner and teacher characteristics (Cronbach and Snow, 1977), concluded that children with difficulties in learning need a mixture of teaching approaches with a bias towards fairly structured methods.

Krishnaswamy and Shankar (2003), point towards differentiated instruction as an approach for the teacher to weave individual goals into the classroom content and instructional strategies.

Singh (2001) reported differences in the educational needs of children with SEN. She found that all the stakeholders, including children with SEN, opined that the curricula followed were not relevant. There was repetition in the content of the sciences, social sciences, and general knowledge. The excessive textual burden and the bulk of exercises in most of the subjects were also found to be irrelevant. The components of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, such as, games and sports, drawing and painting, craft and cultural activities should be an essential part of the curriculum.

Some pupils may have specific difficulties in learning languages and may require help in improving their areas of weaknesses and in devising strategies to overcome their difficulties. There may be some children who may require alternative communication systems to compensate for the difficulties they face in using spoken language. Lele and Khaledkar (1994) found that children having problems in hearing had difficulty in language comprehension when instructed with the language textbook prescribed for the general class. These children with special needs required a greater number of periods to learn the content. Paranjpe (1996) reported significant differences in achievement of language skills between children with and without hearing impairment, the former being deficient in language skills. Children having difficulties in writing may need to make use of ICT, while there may be some who may require opportunities to learn and develop a tactile method of interpreting written information. Content related to real-life situations would benefit all children.

Studies and experiments (Dash, 1997) have indicated that most of the children with disabilities can play a number of games without any support or special effort. Little effort is needed to make the games adapted to children with visual and multiple disabilities. Krejci (1998) reported that children with orthopaedic disabilities could also do the yogasans (yogic postures/ exercises). Available research evidence also reveals that music, dance, and yogasans have a therapeutic effect on children with mental retardation, and have helped improve their attention and concentration Thakur Hari Prasad Institute of Research and Rehabilitation of Mentally Retarded (2001)

The NCFSE (2000) was critical of the present evaluation system. Singhal (2004), studying the existing practices at the school level has stated

that teachers regard the mainstream as curriculum-oriented and examination-driven, with pressures of “high achievement”. She noted “teaching in India stands subordinated to examination and not examination to teaching.” Thus, the focus is on the completion of a rigid and vast curriculum.

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