



CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN SCHOOL: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TEACHER

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Abstract

Teacher plays an important in school as they are the facilitator of learning in education. Their perspective of children with special needs effects the development of both general and disabled students. The goal of the study is to analyze teacher perspective of children with special need in general and special school. The data is collected from twenty-five teachers, five teachers from special school and the remaining twenty teachers from regular school. They are asked whether special school or regular school is the better prospect for children with special needs.

Keywords- Teacher, Children with special needs, General school, Special school.

INTRODUCTION

Special School and Regular school are different in nature. Special schools are designed to cater to students with disabilities or learning differences, providing specialized support services and individualized education plans. In contrast, regular schools typically offer a more general curriculum and may not have the resources or expertise to accommodate the specific needs of students with disabilities. Special schools often have smaller class sizes and a higher teacher-to-student ratio, allowing for more personalized attention and tailored instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students. In regular schools, while efforts are made to support students with disabilities through accommodations and individualized education plans, the resources and expertise available may not always be as extensive as in special schools. It is important for parents and educators to carefully consider these factors when choosing the best educational setting to support the academic and developmental needs of students with disabilities.

Government and private schools alike place a significant deal of importance on the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009), which established primary education as a fundamental right for every child. The social, constitutional, and legal rights of all children to participate in educational processes and practices must be reflected in our schools and classrooms. More than ever, our classrooms must be prepared to accommodate students with an array of needs and abilities.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In Mizoram, Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC) was initiated in 1985 under the Department of State Council of Educational research and Training (SCERT), Mizoram, in order to achieve the goal of 'Education for All'. This is a major milestone towards the inclusion of children with special needs in an educational institution.

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With the launching of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which was commonly known as SSA, The State Education Department started implementing it from the financial year 2000-2001 till today. SSA is expected to ensure that every child with special needs irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability is provided education in an appropriate environment. It adopts 'Zero rejection' policy so that no child is left out of the education system. Through this initiative, students are provided with the necessary resources and support to excel in their studies and develop strong social skills. By fostering a nurturing environment that encourages academic growth and social interaction, students are able to reach their full potential and succeed both in the classroom and in their personal lives. This holistic approach to education not only benefits the students individually but also contributes to the overall well-being of the school community.

Moving beyond sympathy towards empowerment and inclusion can lead to creating a more supportive and inclusive educational environment where individuals with disabilities are given equal opportunities to learn and thrive. By changing perceptions and breaking down barriers, teachers can play a crucial role in promoting acceptance, understanding, and respect for persons with disabilities in Mizoram. This shift in mindset also involves providing teachers with the necessary training and resources to effectively support students with disabilities in their classrooms. By equipping educators with the knowledge and tools to accommodate diverse learning needs, schools in Mizoram can create a more inclusive and accessible learning environment for all students. Additionally, fostering a culture of empathy and understanding among teachers can help cultivate a sense of belonging and acceptance for individuals with disabilities, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and equitable society in Mizoram.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ali et al., (2006) conducted a study titled “An Empirical Study on Teachers’ Perceptions Towards Inclusive Education in Malaysia” among 235 teachers, of mainstream and special education teachers in the public primary and secondary schools. The study found that teachers have a positive perception towards the implementation of the inclusive education programme. However, there are some aspects that can be improved such as the collaboration between the mainstream and special education teachers and the preparation to train regular teachers in handling and teaching students with special needs. The need to provide adequate resources to inclusive classes is never been more critical. In addition, there should be an increasing effort in promoting inclusive education programme to the public as well as to the stakeholders.

Johnson et al., (2014) in their study of “What does Teachers’ Perception have to do with Inclusive Education” found that in the ten public primary school teachers selected, 90% of the teachers displayed negative perceptions towards inclusive education and its implementation. Prominent factors which influenced these negative perceptions included insufficient teacher training, lack of resources and support, poor infrastructure, and large class sizes. Teachers also felt that special needs students would not have their needs met in an inclusive setting, and should be education in specialized schools.

Iliadou (2023) carried out a study named “Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Inclusive Education of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)” among 60 Greek teachers of general primary education. According to the study, there are moderately positive views on the inclusion of students with ASD in general education. Of the individual and demographic factors examined in this study, only age was found to significantly influence teachers' views. In particular, the fact that older teachers had much more negative attitudes about the inclusion of students with ASD may have been expected, but it indicates a possible factor that does not facilitate the inclusion of these students, especially when you consider that older teachers are usually also those in school leaders.

Objective of the study-

- (i) To find out teachers’ preference of school for children with special needs.
- (ii) To find out the improvement of children with special needs.
- (iii) To investigate the effect of teaching method to children with disability.
- (iv) To know teacher perception about the capabilities of children with special needs.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

Methodology

The focus of the current study is how teachers perceived the disabilities they encountered at school. The current study used the normative survey method to gather data from government and special education institutions..

Population of the study

The population for the present study comprises of one (1) special school and five (5) general/govt. school. A brief description of each school are as follows -

1. Shalom special school, Serchhip
2. Govt. IOC P/S, Serchhip
3. Govt. New Serchhip M/S, Serchhip
4. Govt. Midland M/S, Serchhip
5. Govt. Kawnpui P/S, Serchhip
6. Govt. Agri P/S, Serchhip

Sample of the study

The researcher selected five (5) special school teacher and twenty (20) general school teacher.

Method of data collection

The selected schools were personally visited by the researcher After explaining the reason for visit, the school authority give the permission to collect the data.

Tools and techniques used for data collection

An interview guides was prepared by the researcher for teachers' Perception about children with disabilities in school.

Procedures of data analysis

The investigator used percentage only.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Perception of teacher- Twenty-five teachers, five from special school and twenty teachers from general schools were asked about their perception on children with special needs.

Table 1. Teacher preference of school for children with disability

| Type of School | Special School | General School |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Teacher Response | 15 | 10 |

As seen in the table above, 15 teachers believed that special schools should be the best option for children with disabilities, while 10 teachers felt that regular educational institutions would be the best option.

According to a special education teacher, children with special needs attend special schools for their academic performance and personality development. They are not subjected to prejudice from other students, so in her opinion, special schools are beneficial for them. Parents who wish to send their special needs children to general education would be wasting their money, according to two educators at the same institution. Special education students

require social attention and general education does not provide that. In a similar vein, two general teachers believed that children with disabilities should be assigned to special schools because they require extra care and attention. Additionally, they claimed that they lacked specialized training and were unable to meet the needs of these children.

On the other hand, a general school teacher said that students with disabilities should attend general schools because they are treated like regular students, which will benefit their academic performance and personality. However, if a child's disability is found to be severe, it is best for them to attend a special school because general school teachers are not specially trained and may not be able to meet the needs of the students. There are no special educators at the school who also care for students with special needs (Ali et al., 2006).

Since they are treated equally, the majority of teachers who advocated for general education for disabled students also believed that if a child's disability was classified as low or moderate, it would be better for them to attend general education rather than a special education programme, as this would support the equality of all students, regardless of ability.

Although teachers have differing opinions about how to educate disabled students, they all want to see disabled students develop to their full potential. From the standpoint of general teachers, they also mentioned a similar issue, namely that the school lacks special educators with the necessary training to especially assist children with disabilities. They are far too preoccupied with the demanding school curriculum; therefore, they cannot afford to treat them differently.

Perception about improvement in the Children

Three special school teachers stated that they had noticed an improvement in the students' performance. After attending the school, they claimed to have seen numerous changes. Children with disabilities also require discipline in their lives; prior to attending school, these children had neither discipline nor instruction, but following their attendance, their personalities have improved and developed.

A teacher made the observation that a great deal had changed since they began attending school. Prior to attending school, they would go to the streets and pick up trash, but once they started attending classes, they stopped and adopted new lifestyles. Teachers reported seeing improvements in students with disabilities in both special and general education settings.

The aforementioned results unequivocally demonstrate the significance of teachers having a good attitude towards students with disabilities. Teachers in special schools had positive attitudes and displayed affection, love, optimism, understanding, and other emotions to other children, which consequently led to a rise in the children's performance improving.

Teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities in general schools are fairly comparable to one another. Despite being conscious of their limitations, teachers have been reported to exhibit a negative attitude towards students with special needs (Johnson et al., 2014). They maintained that they gave each pupil the same treatment and that they did not have the time to give children with disabilities more care or attention.

Perception about Influence of methods of teaching

Children are influenced by the methods and strategies used by teachers in the classroom. All of the teachers in special education schools are fully aware of the cognitive abilities of the students. They noted that, despite the fact that they had observed significant improvements in the children's academic records, they never attempted to teach students more than they could understand because they frequently forget what they have learned.

Teachers in general schools instructed special students in the same manner as they did regular students. Their comprehension level and requirements are not being taken into account. It has been shown that teachers do not provide the students with special needs with extra attention. They did not change their strategies or approach to teaching students with disabilities (Iliadou, 2023). Sometimes the learners with disabilities receive little to no education by simply sitting in their seats and not grasping the lesson or topic they were intended to learn. They just go to school in the same manner as they always do.

Perception about their capabilities

When questioned about the educational potential of students with special requirements, teachers from both special and general institutions provide their opinions. Every teacher held the view that students with special needs are capable of gaining knowledge and growth. Some of them are gifted in mathematics, some in the arts and painting, and some demonstrate a rapid rate of learning. They believe they are capable of doing anything that a regular person might do. They expressed their belief that they are capable of learning and being trained, but they require special instructors, special care, special instruction, and unique training.

Suggestion

It is evident from the aforementioned findings that teachers have differing perspectives about students with disabilities. A teacher with specific education or awareness of disabilities is required. Special educators should be employed by all regular schools to provide individualized care for children with disabilities. For typical students as well as children with disabilities, improved infrastructure is required in both special and regular schools. The school's structure is outdated, so it requires updated furnishings like benches and tables. Also, these educational institutions require renovation.

Conclusion

Children with disabilities are able to change their behaviour based on their teachers' perceptions. It indicates that teachers were crucial in helping disabled children change their behaviour. Teachers have to view students with disabilities positively. They can persuade and urge them to take care of their own needs instead of their parents'. Since most disabled children respect their teachers, educators should make a positive impression on these students. Children with disabilities are also aware of people who disregard them. When someone mistreats or disregards them, they become aware of it and never get along with that person again. It is the responsibility of teachers to care for students with disabilities in the classroom, so it is critical that they maintain a positive outlook and treat the students with disabilities appropriately.

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