



Challenges Faced by the Parents and Teachers in Inclusive Education: Special Focus on Children with Dyslexia and Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Dr. Sonali Mukherjee (Profile)

Research Experience: Worked as a research assistant on a project titled: Standardization of tests for the identification of children with Dyslexia for about 14 months.

Worked as senior research fellow in the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR), DRDO, Delhi for about five years. Worked in defence related projects and simultaneously worked for the doctoral programme on Identification of cognitive markers for Dyslexic and non-dyslexic children.

Teaching Experience:

At tertiary level of school taught psychology for 4.5 years.

Presently teaching various branches of psychology such as Developmental psychology, Health Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, History and System of Psychology, Experimental Psychology and knowledge application skills at Christ (Deemed to be University) since 2020 till date.

Conference Participation:

Poster presentation in one international conference on Combatant Counselling.

Oral presentation in 16 International Conferences on Learning Disability, Cognition, Health and Wellness.

Oral Presentation in 4 National Conferences on Health Psychology, Children with Special needs, and Positive Psychology.

Awards and Recognition

Twice bagged with best paper presentation award in International Conference on

Developmental Disability (SAP, DRDS I) at Department of Psychology,

University of Calcutta from 6th March -8th March 2014 and International Conference on Recent

Advances in Cognition & Health (ICRACH), at Banaras Hindu University(BHU), Varanasi, from 23rd - 25th Jan.2014 respectively.

Workshop Participation:

Participated in several workshops and Modules on Learning Disability, Dyslexia, Art therapy, SPSS, Neuro-Linguistic Programming and many more.

Publication:

One publication in an International Journal as one of the authors on Markers of Dyslexic Children.

One publication in national journal as single authors.

One field book published on Comat Stress.

Area of Interest:

Area of interest include: Developmental Disorders, Dyslexia, Child Counselling, and Bilingualism.

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Research Experience: Worked as research assistant on a project related to Meditation and Attention about 1 year.

During D. Phil. Programme have done research work for 3 years in area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

One more research project has been done on Mental Health.

Teaching Experience: At tertiary level of school taught psychology for 3 years.

Presently teaching various branches of psychology such as Social Psychology, Health Psychology, Psychopathology at higher education level since 2015.

Conference Participation:

Poster presentation in one International Conference on ASD

Oral presentation in 4 International Conferences on ASD

Oral Presentation in 5 National conferences one on ASD and others were related to Environmental Psychology, Gender Studies and Education Psychology

Workshop Participation:

Participated in one workshop on Projective Techniques and two on ASD.

Publication:

One publication in an International Journal as one of the multiple authors on Meditation and Attention.

Two publication in international journals one as first author and one as second author.

One publication in national journal as single authors.

Area of Interest:

Mental health, in this area author has done some research work and want to carry forward those project, lectures also have been delivered at various forums.

Other area of interest are Indigenous notions of psychological disorders and its intervention, social, emotional and cognitive development, ASD and linguistics.

Abstract

Each and every child is unique in some or other aspect but among that only there are some children who are so unique that do not fit in the mainstream education.

Taking this view into perspective inclusive education has been introduced in India which entails educating the children with dyslexia and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with that of typically developing children within the same roof. According to the Education Policy of 2020 it explicitly mentions the children irrespective of their type and nature of disability can be admitted and studied in the main stream education. It brings all the students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area and seeks to maximize the potential of all the students.

Inclusion plays a very important role as in inclusive education children develop a positive understanding of themselves and other people wherein, they learn important academic skills. However inclusive education has proven to be one of the challenges faced by the parents, teachers and caregivers. In today's era it's a big challenge to educate these children.

The present paper emphasizes the challenges faced by the parents and teachers in inclusive education. Due to the lack of awareness about the different needs of the children, parents, teachers and caregivers neither they could able to understand the nature of the problem nor they were able to cater the needs of the children. So, in this paper we will be focusing about various challenging areas which the parents and teachers suffer in context to Dyslexic and children with ASD.

Keywords: Dyslexia; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Inclusive education; special educator.

Introduction

The present paper highlights the challenges faced by the parents, teachers and special educators to cater the needs of the children with Dyslexia and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in inclusive education. The investigator also discusses about the National Education Policy of India and also highlights about the various awareness programs which can be beneficial for the teachers, parent and caregivers. The paper also focuses upon various strategies which can be fruitful for the teachers and parents to cater the special needs of the children.

Towards the end of the paper the investigator has proposed a reciprocal relationship between the teachers, special educators and parents to facilitate the learning of the children with special needs. If this relationship will be reinforced then it will serve as a boon for these children.

India is a diversified country wherein all people stay together, a heterogenous population is there and in our democratic country where each and every child has a right for education. All the children should be given equal opportunity to learn to the limits of their capacities.

So, for this simulated environment is necessary to create where all the children irrespective of their learning disabilities can be incorporated. This stimulation environment is termed as inclusive education which has been proposed by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), India. For this a classroom has been created which welcomes all children, which caters the needs of the differently abled children.

Idea behind Inclusion

Inclusion has been the subject of heated debate among the professional journals and it has emerged as a reform in the education of children with disabilities, which gained momentum since 1994 UNESCO “World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” (Salamanca Statement, Spain 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000). The Statement implores government to give maximum priority to making education system inclusive and implement the principle of inclusive education as a matter of policy.

Inclusion is the provision of services to students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. It means meeting the needs of children with disabilities for a free and quality public education in the least restrictive and most effective environment.

The goal of the inclusion is to prepare the students to participate as full and contributing members of the society. Inclusion does not mean “dumping”.

Inclusion is a basic value that extends to all children. Inclusion gives a message “everyone belongs to the school-everyone is welcome to the school”. Inclusive schooling is the process of carrying out the operation of supportive school, a process of operating a classroom or school as a community where the needs of all members are met and people support and accept responsibility for each other. In inclusive settings the focus is on how to develop supportive classrooms and schools that fit, nurture and support the educational and social needs of every student in attendance.

Inclusive education is an umbrella term that encompasses considerations and strategies to support the diversity of learners in a given context by minimizing barriers to learning, as this may impact an individual's ability to achieve her full potential. In this way inclusive education advocates for bringing each and every child of school age in the same stream of schooling.

Inclusive education is based on the idea that every child can learn and realize opportunities to participate in school, supported with resources required as per her condition and taught in a manner appropriate to her needs.

Objectives of Inclusive Education

Based on UNICEF for children (2020) these objectives of Inclusive education are as follows :-

1. To ensure that no child is denied admission in mainstream education.
2. To ensure that every child would have the right to access to school.
3. To provide home waged learning.
4. To promote distance education.
5. To increase the coverage of the children with special needs.
6. To enable the disabled children to get opportunities for children in their own locations.
7. To integrate the disabled children of different categories of rural areas in general schools of education.
8. To sensitize general education to meet the needs of the children of different extent of disability ranging from mild to severe and profound cases.
9. To ensure equity among diversity by recognizing learner diversity especially in ways and pace of learning.
10. To strengthen the case for integrated education and effective learning by adopting learning through mutual sharing, discussion, group work, problem solving etc.

Programs towards Inclusion

In the National Education Policy 2020 of India, it has been emphasized that all the students irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system, with particular focus on historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups must be provided to all. Education is a great medium and is the best tool for achieving economic, social mobility, inclusion, and equality.

Initiatives must be in place to ensure that all students from such groups, despite inherent obstacles, should get proper education and hone their skills in the respective abilities and capabilities.

This programme laid special emphasis on the integration of children with mild to moderate disabilities, in line with world trends and became one of the government of India's largest flagship programmes of the time in terms of funding with 40,000 million rupees.

Another programme which was launched to impart education to all the children is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education in 2001, in one such initiative.

Inspite of providing so many provisions by the government of India there are several challenges faced by the Children with Dyslexia and ASD. General learning difficulties cause low levels of performance in all subjects and their learning gets affected in many areas.

They cause low performance in one or more curriculum areas because of the difficulties children face in some aspects of literacy and numeracy skills (Frederickson and Cline 2009).

Challenges in Inclusion for dyslexic children

Dyslexia is a term that refers to the difficulty with reading. People with dyslexia have difficulty connecting letters they see on a page with the sounds they make. As a result, reading becomes a slow, effortful and not a fluent process for them (DSM-5, 2013).

It is very difficult for the teachers to comprehend the nature of Dyslexia and also to understand the main symptoms of Dyslexia. Unfortunately, dyslexia is still misunderstood. Many people believe that dyslexia is when the children start writing reverse letters while this can be just a sign of dyslexia but there is much more to this language based disability.

Dyslexia is characterized by unexpected difficulty in learning to read the printed text material and adults who otherwise possess the intelligence, motivation, and schooling considered necessary for accurate and fluent reading (Shaywitz 1998).

Dyslexia is the term which is first used in the year 1887, by German physician Rudolf Berlin uses the term “dyslexia” to help define reading challenges. In India, this term is used basically to characterize the reading, spelling and writing problems. Dyslexia has been recognized as an area of disability requiring special education provision after the formation of National Policy on Education.

However, implementing this National Education Policy in countries like India where it has a heterogeneous population and more than 20 languages with its scripts and varied media of instructions in schools, inspite of that the professionals put an effort to provide remedial classes for children with dyslexia (Venkateshwarlu and Shah, 2002).

The more the teacher knows about dyslexia the more the teacher will be able to actually help a dyslexic child in teaching and handling in inclusive education. The dyslexia-friendly approach involves building on what is known about dyslexia to date and applying that knowledge in the regular classroom, in day-to-day teaching, on the grounds that what benefits children with dyslexia, benefits all children (Basu et al, 2015).

Facilitators of inclusion for Dyslexic children

Inclusion for dyslexic children requires support and commitment from the school management who at least train one teacher in dyslexia and who will disseminate this knowledge to other staff members. Accommodating students with dyslexia in all classroom settings (Mercer 2004). From the previous studies it has been documented that teacher face a lot of challenges while handling the children with Dyslexia.

A study conducted in Lemperou et al. (2011) of the training needs of English foreign language teachers who faced challenges of teaching dyslexic children in inclusive education due to the limited awareness in dealing with dyslexic children. Another study done by Lewis and Norwich (ed.) (2004) strongly argued for the need of specialists who were able to cater the needs of the children. It has also been emphasized the need for special educator who are able to adapt teaching strategies with special education needs.

The studies which have been documented so far have also laid emphasis that dyslexic children also have social and emotional problems which invariably due to the gross difficulty in learning to read, write and comprehend and to meet expectations in some cases (Ryan-2004).

Apart from that they experience anxiety, anger, lowered self-image and depression which may affect wellbeing and academic achievement of the child (Ryan 1994).

Another study conducted by (Basu, et al, 2015) have reported that 83 percent of the teachers faced a lot of challenges while dealing with dyslexic children in terms of academics and behavioral issues.

Many research findings have also indicated that children with dyslexia face a range of quantifiable symptoms. There is no single pattern of difficulty which is persistent in all the children; it manifests a variety of characteristics (Shaywitz, 2003).

Difficulties related to reading, spelling, addition, verbal symptoms and nonlinguistic difficulties can vary from individual to individual. Due to so many difficulties which are related to academics and behaviour, teacher too faces challenges in these aspects.

Besides teachers, parents and caregivers face a lot of difficulties and challenges to understand the different characteristics of dyslexia and to cater those needs. So, in order to remediate this problem, it is very necessary to bring out awareness among this population and its impact on their children (Elbro & Petersen, 2004).

Dyslexia as we know that is a life-long disability in which the children have reading, writing and spelling problems and its symptoms vary from person to person, and can also vary at a different stage in a person's life, but with appropriate intervention, it can produce a significant result (Skiada et al., 2014).

From the previous studies it has been evident that parents who are unaware of dyslexia often show negative feelings such as frustration, denial, and stress when their children do not meet their expectations (Ozonoff, Dawson, & McPartland, 2002). Furthermore, these parents tend to experience anxiety and low self-esteem regarding their children's future life and academic performance.

These behaviors do not only affect the children, but it also gives a negative impact on the parent's life; for instance, excessive fatigue, lack of sleep and stress which ultimately result in physical and mental problems. Thus, parents need to be made aware of their children's conditions as early as possible so that appropriate intervention could be taken, for the wellbeing of both parties.

Story reported by Alias & Dahlan (2015), parents who are not aware of dyslexia experience two significant challenges in raising a dyslexic child, namely; "Difficult yet enduring" and "Self-perseverance". Each of the challenges consists of sub-challenges that parents usually faced in dealing with dyslexic children. From this study, it is evident, parents have reported that it needs a lot of time and patience to handle and to cater the needs of the dyslexic children (Rauf, Ismail1, et al, 2018).

Further it is also reported that due to the lack of awareness the parents couldn't able to understand their chief characteristics and symptoms failing which they are unable to handle the child. There is also need to send them for extra classes provided by special educators to learn more efficiently.

Furthermore, the parents need to keep supporting and encouraging their children rather than scolding or pushing them, considering their nature in giving up, getting frustrated and becoming bored more easily.

On the other hand, the process of teaching this type of children should include visual and storytelling aids to help in improving their studying abilities, as well as improving their attention spans (Yazid & Yin, 2015). Another very important point is that the dyslexic children need to give a brief amount of information which they are able to process at one time.

Challenges of children with ASD in Inclusive education

ASD is defined as neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts including deficit in social reciprocity, non verbal communicative behaviours used for social interaction and skills in developing, maintaining and understanding relationships (DSM-5, 2013).

In India one in hundred children has ASD (Alla Katsnelson, 2018). Data shows that ASD is not an uncommon disorder in India. When these children turn to school going age their parents face problems, worries, stress and anxiety related to their admission in inclusive education because they do not want to face social stigma of sending their children to special education. Therefore, the need of the hour is that these children should be integrated in the mainstream education of inclusion.

The Convention on Rights of the Child (UN:1989) and the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN:2006) clearly outlined the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education. The European Agency has also reported (2018) that when a child with disability goes to an inclusive setting for education she performs academically and socially better than learners educated in a special school kind of exclusive setting.

Hence, it is obvious that inclusion of children with special needs is an essential and unavoidable issue. But as these children have special needs so the responsibility of the educators, parents, peers everyone gets a little enhanced. Study of Hagan and Hebron (2017) suggests that as far as inclusion of ASD children is concerned schools need to be aware of the social experiences of these students.

Researchers has reported that challenges in inclusion of these children is varied (Joseph M. & Tan, 2012). One source of the challenge is the children themselves as the severity of the condition from child to child varies and this level of severity is one factor in making inclusion possible (Eldar, Talmor, et al. 2010).

The second source is the teacher. In making inclusion possible there is need of teachers who understand the unique characteristics associated with ASD (Joseph M. & Tan, 2012).

It is really challenging for teachers to teach the students of special needs with typically developing children. Moreover, in the case of children with ASD it becomes even more challenging because of social and communication related impairments they have (O'Hagan and Hebron, 2017).

Researches reporting teachers' perspective have shown that teachers of children with ASD experience tension in managing the challenges presented by these children in social and emotional understanding (Barnes, 2009; Leach and Duffy, 2009).

Parents could be considered as the third source, Gauri Divan et al. (2012), have clearly shown that parents have apprehension in sending their children to special school because this society will stigmatize them.

Hence inclusion is must because it safeguards the child and her family from social stigma. Furthermore, inclusion is also needed because it enhances wellbeing, social, cognitive and language skills in children with disabilities (Chandler-Olcott and Kluth, 2009).

Based on the researches it could be concluded that academic inclusion is a must for betterment of children with ASD.

Facilitators of inclusion for children with ASD

Researchers suggest that teaching practices and strategies for children with ASD is a main challenge for teachers. Teachers have to enrich their knowledge and information base for special educational needs provision (Humphrey and Parkinson, 2006).

Moreover, three factors are suggested by the researches as key role player in improvisation of teaching process of children with ASD these are:

First, attitude of the teacher towards these children as well as practice of inclusion. Joseph M. et al. (2012) have reported that teachers' attitude can influence the expectations of their students, that will further affect the students' self-image and academic performance.

Second, Training of teachers, it includes professional training, experiential knowledge, awareness soon.

Third, Support groups, it includes parents' involvement, support provided by the educators and professional who are formally trained in dealing with these children and their special needs.

Accommodations of children with Dyslexia and ASD

Teaching children with dyslexia and ASD across settings is challenging. Both general and special education teachers scrutinize the infrastructure of the classrooms that best provides learning of the children.

Teaching children with dyslexia and ASD across settings is challenging. Both general and special education teachers scrutinize accommodations that support the learning and the management of a class of children with dyslexia and ASD.

In order to teach the children with dyslexia and ASD that need a conducive environment wherein the teachers need to understand the nature of dyslexia and ASD and how it affects the children's ability to learn and comprehend.

Since many studies have been clearly documented that teaching dyslexic children and children with ASD in inclusive education is a big challenge on the part of the teachers because of the varied nature of difficulties manifested at the academic level.

So, to resolve the challenges of the class and of the children with dyslexia and ASD the investigator has recommended certain suggestions:

1. **Buddy system should be incorporated in the classroom setting:** The Buddy system in the inclusive setup not only facilitates cognitive learning but it also develops an emotional bonding and attachment with the buddy. In sum it promotes empathy which is strong, developmentally appropriate social and emotional emphasis is crucial in creating a successful inclusion program. Through structured social/emotional lessons, modeling emotional coaching in the moment, as well as play experiences, children learn that we all have feelings and different coping strategies. By exposing the children to teachers and caregivers co-regulating with other students and working them through strong emotions, we are laying the groundwork for building empathy. Students also learn how to enter into another child's world and see the world through another person's eyes. From the

research it has been documented that the buddy system proves to be effective not only in terms of academics but in learning several activities in school like sports, craft work and many more things (Adams, 2017). Still others reported that the buddy system enhances greater social integration, development of leadership skills, better classroom management, and improved academic outcomes.

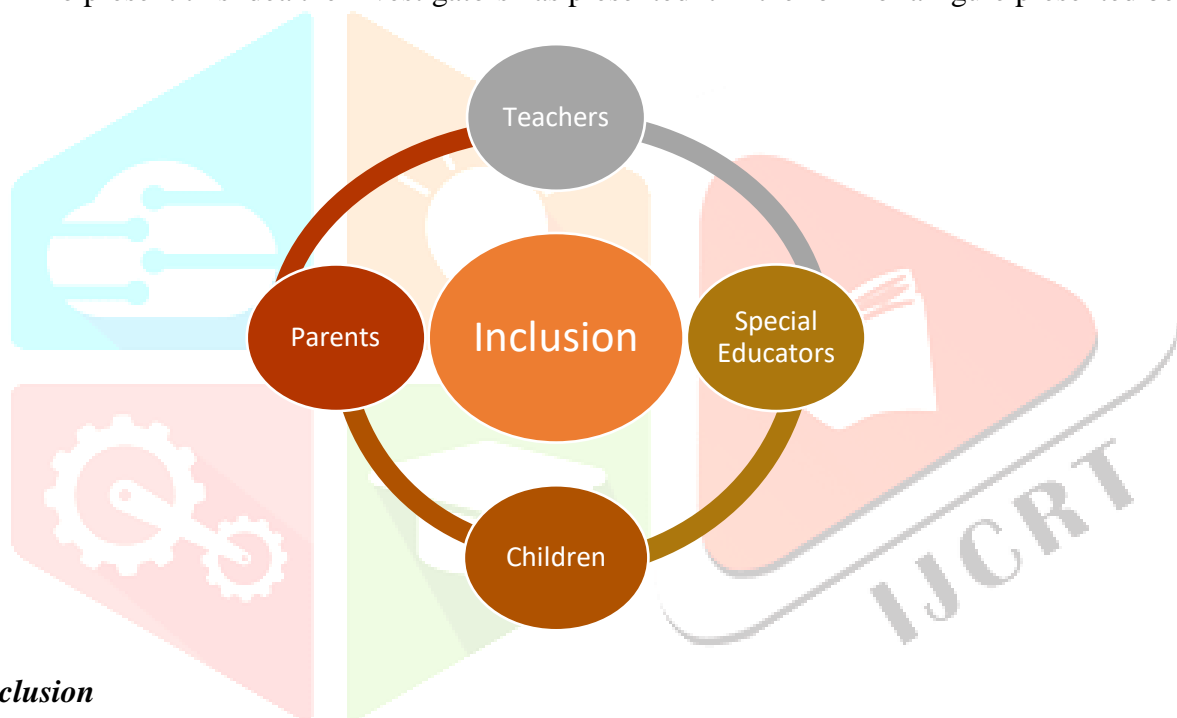
2. **Adequate assessment of language processing is important:** Dyslexia, is a disorder of the language processing systems in the brain (Basu, Poonam & Beniwal 2015). As like dyslexic children, children with ASD also has problem in processing the language components. These children need to give a brief amount of information which they could able to process accurately because from the past researches it has been evident that these children could able to process the information when it is presented at slower pace and one instruction at a time since it is difficult for them to process the information word by word. (Snowling, 2005, Singh & Thapa, 2015).
3. **Modification of the syllabus:** According to CBSE BYE LAWS modified paper can be given to these children, extra reading time should be given, and prompter needs to be assigned depending upon their nature of disability.
4. **Roles of motivation and fear of failing are important:** From the research it is evident that dyslexic children have problems decoding the information word by word. So, for the fear of failure in reading the dyslexic children avoid reading the printed material. Because children with dyslexia and ASD may have a brain difference that requires them to be taught in a more intense fashion than their peers. They need more visual aids which facilitate their learning. Without intense intervention, low motivation may develop as children with dyslexia and ASD try to avoid a difficult and painful task. So, need of the hour is that teachers need to give positive reinforcement for any small activity which they complete independently.
5. **Awareness among the Teachers and parents:** It is very important to spread awareness among the teachers and parents to know about the different characteristics of Dyslexia and ASD. This awareness will not only help the teachers and parents to know about the nature of Dyslexia and ASD but also will help to understand better in terms of their chief characteristics.

To sum up, it can be inferred that these children have a reciprocal relationship with their teachers, parents and special educators who can facilitate in their learning and wellbeing. This relationship should be strengthened more and more such that it gives an aid to their learning. Moreover, these children need an extra attention from their facilitators to develop a strong bond and attachment. This will help in two ways:

Firstly, The facilitator will be more aware about the needs of the child and also try to understand how to cater those needs.

Secondly, the facilitator will develop a strong connection with the child which will not only facilitate in their academic learning but also improves their social learning as well.

To present this idea the investigators has presented it in the form of a figure presented below:



Conclusion

To meet the challenges, it is important to make the teachers more aware, sensitive and well equipped with flexible teaching skills which can cover almost all types of students. Furthermore, individualized program for students, support teams, classroom teacher's awareness and support from specialists are also needed for academic inclusion for these children. Collaboration between families and schools is also required in order to provide almost equal pace with the typically developing children.

It has to be noted by everyone that special school could not be a permanent solution for these children hence inclusion should be promoted in the educational setup.

Future Studies and Direction:

Although the present study contributed towards the challenges faced by the teachers, special educators and parents to cater the needs of these children. These challenges are varied in terms of catering their academic needs, social needs and psychological needs. In addition to this the paper has clearly depicted about the various awareness programs which can be conducted for school teachers, special educators, parents and caregivers which can be beneficial for them in handling these children at their own pace. Future empirical researches can be conducted on this particular domain to empirically prove these ideas presented in the paper. Another set of studies which can be carried out is for teachers, to psycho-educate them such that they will be better trained in handling and catering the needs of these children in inclusive education. Besides that another studies which can be carried out is Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) needs of the children where the teachers can able to better understand their social emotional needs which will not only facilitate their social learning but will also improve their academic learning which leads to holistic development.

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