ISSUES RELATED TO DIFFERENTLY ABLED LEARNERS AT INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

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Abstract: Inclusive education has been one of the most discussed topics for almost a decade and is still one of the most burning issues in relation to the current education system in every part of the world. The United Nations, in its Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, has included inclusive education as one of the most desired outcomes. India is also making policies from the past to make a successful inclusive setting society for the education system. India has prepared the New Education Policy 2020, which places ample focus on inclusive education. In this current paper, the researcher has interviewed 60 differently abled students by using the Respondent Interview Schedule (RIS) for the differently abled Students (DAS) about their views on different stakeholder groups associated with the inclusive educational school setting. The researcher has used the grounded theory of qualitative research methods for the analysis of the data. During the analysis, the researcher has developed theories concerning different stakeholders. The researcher has also emphasized the problems and prospects of inclusive education for those who are differently abled.

1.INTRODUCTION:

Inclusive education gradually makes its way in the main education system after years of struggle. During the journey of inclusive education, there came many landmarks which made this education system more relevant to the traditional education system. The same thing happened with Indian education system. The most important development happened in the year 1994.

India has signed the Biwako Millenium Framework for Action toward an inclusive, barrier-free, and rights-based society for people with disabilities, the Declaration on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region, both of which reaffirmed the rights of all children, including children with disabilities, to access education in regular school settings. India also adheres to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action and the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Perhaps for the first time, this outlined the idea of inclusive education in succinct terms, emphasized that children with special needs must have access to regular schools, and urged all governments to adopt the principle of inclusive education as a matter of law and policy. The slogan "change the environment to suit the child, not the child to suit the environment" became a well-known quote as a result of Wolfensberger's Normalization Principle's earlier emphasis on the disabled individual. In India, 93rd amendment to the Indian Constitution passed in December 2001, affirms the Government's commitment to (EFA) or Education for All. The positive factor is the change incorporated in the Education Act by adding a pertinent clause which clarifies that "ALL" includes children with disabilities.

The World Conference on Special Needs in Education, held in Salamanca, Spain, marked its 25th anniversary in 2019. A Framework for Action was adopted by 25 international organizations and 92 governments at the conference, urging schools to welcome all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or linguistic characteristics. This is made even stronger by Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which requires educational systems to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote opportunities for lifelong learning for all."

After all these developments and many more it is an inevitable fact that still our education system is not fully able to help those who were being left out. Still 258 million children, adolescents and youth are not in school. More than 617 million children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. It is also important to note that only half of the world's children receive pre-primary education, a failure that limits children's futures and deepens inequities in later learning (UNICEF, 2019). This century needs utmost focus in the education of differently abled students. There should not be any barrier of policy for including special needs children in developing in nations. A single model may not be the solution and therefore, practices pertaining to inclusion should also be developed in specific context. The culture issue should not become a hindrance for inclusion (Pandit et al., 2016).

2.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1) To study the views of differently abled children of school level about the attitude of the teachers towards successful inclusive education system.
2) To study the views of differently abled children of school level about the attitude of their parents towards successful inclusive education system.
3) To study the views of differently abled children of school level about the attitude of the school administration towards successful inclusive education system.
4) To study the views of differently abled children of school level about the attitude of the peer students towards successful inclusive education system.

3.RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1) How far the attitudes of the teachers are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?
2) How far the attitudes of the peer students are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?
3) How far the attitudes of the school administration are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?
4) How far the attitudes of their parents are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?

4.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

During this study the researcher has used a Grounded theory methodology. Heck (2004) has rightly said that the grounded theory methodology is an accepted qualitative approach in evaluation research, particularly where policy complexity lends a more quantitative approach less practical. The current existing literature is helpful in describing the theoretical aspects of the inclusive education system, but when a theory is not available to explain a process, Grounded theory is a good design to use (Creswell, 2007, p.66).

4.1. Population: The researcher has selected government or government aided schools (without primary schools) of West Bengal as population for this study. It varies area wise throughout the landscape of West Bengal. The whole population is divided in two parts for better access, namely, North Bengal and South Bengal.

4.2. Sample: To fulfill the objectives of the study the researcher has randomly selected five districts (2 districts from North part and 3 districts from the South part West Bengal), those are Malda, Dakshin Dinajpur, Purba Bardhaman, Murshidabad and Birbhum. During this study the researcher has interviewed: Total number of respondents: 60.

This study is delimited to the Government schools of the West Bengal State only. Here, samples were selected by purposive sampling method. This study is delimited to some specific categories of differently abled students: like, locomotor disability, hearing impairment (only hard of hearing), visual impairment (only low vision) and learning disability. This study has used qualitative method for analysis and interpretation. In this study, the researcher has used Respondent Interview Schedule (RIS) for the differently abled Students (DAS). After the development of the data gathering instrument, the researcher decided to apply them on the chosen site, for which he took the permission of the concerned authority and made a rapport with the participant with full interest, and then they were ready to give proper and real responses. All the required measures are taken carefully to complete all the interviews. During these interview sessions, the mobile phone was placed in plain sight of participants to record the conversation, and all seemed at ease with the questions asked by the researcher. Interviews were free from interruptions and lasted an average of 30 minutes.

5.ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The analysis of this study have been drawn after going through the participant interviews, anecdotes from observations, documents review and data gathered from the sample location. Observations were made during continuous educational activities in the schools.

Countless conversations, interviews, and field notes combined to produce hundreds of pages of material, which necessitated careful examination and analysis in order to comprehend the meanings or to develop a hypothesis from it. The total process is basically consists of initial/ open coding then focused coding.

❖ Analysis of Research Question 1:

▪ How far the attitudes of the teachers are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?

The researcher has pointed here few line by line coding for the analysis of this research question:

Text	Codes
"School teachers from town area show less interest towards me"	Urban ones less interested
"Our teachers used to have less knowledge about us"	Less knowledge
"I am cursed by my teachers for my problems regarding my issue"	Cursing me
"In our school, maximum aged teachers have a very helpful attitude about us and they behave pretty well with us"	Old teachers are good
"My teacher beats me without any concrete reason, and often behave badly"	Beating without reason
"The number is still low, but few teachers are helpful towards my need"	Few are helpful
"Many teachers don't even know my name, and of course my overall condition is a reason behind that"	Many don't know the name
"In many occasion, the situation demands that my teachers had to touch me, but for some unknown reason they don't"	Afraid of touching us
"In many situation it clearly shows that many teachers don't care about us"	Many don't care about us
"Maximum teachers are trying to invest their times to the bright students of my class"	Focusing on the bright ones
"I am not able to clear my doubts in class as most of the teachers stop me from asking questions in class"	Do not ask questions
"Few teachers have confessed that they always try hard to help me but	Willing but helpless

due to many issues they are not able to do that"	
"Few of my teacher used to say that they wish they can get the full support of the system to help me"	Asking support
"My teacher named, X mam, is my real support in the school"	Female teachers are positive
"Few newly appointed teachers are very mush helpful to us and they can understand well about the issues I used to have in the school, I have heard that they are trained too"	Importance of Training
"My teacher often scold me without any specific reason"	Often scold without reason

Now in the second phase of the analysis of the interview data, the researcher has prepared sub-categories to categories (C1 to C8), which are:

C1- Unwilling attitude of many, C2- Gender biasness prevails, C3- Locality influence, C4- Cooperation seeker, C5- Few favors, C6-Inner self acts, C7- Avoidance in self defence, C8- Less effort by many to resolve.

After this the researcher has made the themes (T1-T5) regarding the responses of the differently abled students, those themes are:

T1-Dependency on gender, T2- Class dependent acceptance, T3- Training, T4- Socio cultural impact, T5- Dependency on age.

As the theory development is the main aspect of grounded theory methodology, so the theory derived from the above mentioned themes is:

> ➢ 'According to the differently abled students, the attitude of the teachers towards successful inclusion is an age, class/grade, gender dependent phenomena as well as influenced by their professional training and socio-cultural impact.'

❖ Analysis of Research Question 2:

- ▪ How far the attitudes of the peer students are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?

The researcher has pointed here few line by line coding for the analysis of this research question:

Text	Codes
"Maximum of the students are not very comfortable interacting with me"	Not comfortable
"In my class there are few different types of SEN children, they get different behaviours from the same student"	Getting different behaviour
"In my class I get less chance to interact with other students but in that few chances I have a few good friends who were at the starting not very easy to me but gradually they are"	Gradually getting easy
"I have one student in my class who is different in the lot when it comes to behaving with us and doing it wonderfully, may be that is because he has a sibling having orthopedically handicapped"	Respecting inabilities having sibling of the same category
"What I have felt that maximum of my peer students were not very friendly before but after few interactions most of them are friendly now"	Friendly after interaction

"I have few good friends of mine, who become friendly after knowing and rather realizing my inabilities and that gives me strength"	Friends after knowing about inabilities
"I always feel that if my peer students can realize our condition they will act better with me"	Realize our condition

Now in the second phase of the analysis of the interview data, the researcher has prepared sub-categories to categories (C1 to C8), which are:

C1- Unwilling attitude of many, C2- Interaction influence, C3- Slow in response, C4- Befriends hold positive gesture, C5- Less idea about disability, C6-Few perceive positively, C7- Intimacy of friendship, C8- Gender biasness prevails.

After this the researcher has made the themes (T1-T4) regarding the responses of the differently abled students, those themes are:

T1- Frequency of contact, T2- Empathy driven, T3- Knowledge about disability, T4- Dependency on gender.

As the theory development is the main aspect of grounded theory methodology, so the theory derived from the above mentioned themes is:

> ➢ 'According to the differently abled children, the attitude of the peer students towards successful inclusion is a gender dependent and empathy driven phenomena and favourable attitude significantly increases when frequency of contact with the differently abled ones and knowledge about differently abled ones increases.'

❖ Analysis of Research Question 3:

▪ How far the attitudes of the school administration are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?

Regarding this research question and after analyzing the responses the researcher has developed different categories (C1-C7), those are:

C1- Skills in special education, C2- Gender dependent, C3- Problem solving strategy, C4- Accessibility, C5- Providing of supporting aid, C6- Higher schools more supportive, C7- Concern about implementation.

After repeated analysis of those responses the major themes emerged as:

T1- Training in special education, T2- Planning of framework, T3- Resource management, T4- Types of schools.

As the theory development is the main aspect of grounded theory methodology, so the theory derived from the above mentioned themes is:

> ➢ ''According to the differently abled students, the attitude of the school administrator towards successful inclusion requires their proper training in special education, which will make them efficient in planning the framework and managing the resources to help the differently abled students.'

❖ Analysis of Research Question 4:

▪ How far the attitudes of their parents are supportive according to the differently abled children towards a successful inclusive education system?

Regarding this research question and after analyzing the responses the researcher has developed different categories (C1-C7), those are:

C1- Supporting with eagerness, C2- Gender dependent, C3- Risk taking young ones, C4- Male counterparts skeptical, C5- Non adjusting old-ones, C6- Higher schools more supportive, C7- Concern about implementation.

After repeated analysis of those responses the major themes emerged as:

T1- Positive views, T2- Age dependent, T3- Gender dependability, T4- Degree of disability.

As the theory development is the main aspect of grounded theory methodology, so the theory derived from the above mentioned themes is:

> ➢ 'According to the differently abled children, the attitude of their parents towards successful inclusion is a gender and age dependent phenomenon and they are having mostly positive views, which somehow varies with the degree of disability of their children.'

6.MAJOR FINDINGS:

a) According to the differently abled students, the attitude of the teachers towards successful inclusion is an age, class/grade, gender dependent (*Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014; Vaz et al., 2015; Parasuram, 2006; Rakap & Kaczmarekc. 2010*) phenomena as well as influenced by their professional training (*Ghanizadeh, Bahredar & Moeini, 2006; Sari, 2007; Pandit et al., 2017*) and socio-cultural impact.

b) According to the differently abled children, the attitude of the peer students towards successful inclusion is a gender dependent and empathy driven phenomena and favourable attitude significantly increases when frequency of contact (*Chen and Lu, 2006; Maggio et al., 2021*) with the differently abled ones and knowledge about differently abled ones (*Lu et al., 2021*) increases.

c) According to the differently abled students, the attitude of the school administrator towards successful inclusion requires their proper training in special education (*Bailey & Du Plessis, 1997; Horrocks, White and Roberts, 2008; Steinke, 2010; Galano, 2012; Praisner, 2003; Brown,2007; Chandler, 2015*), which will make them efficient in planning the framework (*Sarı, Çelikoz & Seçer, 2009; Ira, 2015*) and managing the resources (*Praisner, 2003; Choi, 2008; Usman, 2011; Farris, 2011; Smith, 2011; Hack, 2014 & Chandler, 2015; Pandit et al., 2016*) to help the differently abled students.

d) According to the differently abled children, the attitude of their parents towards successful inclusion is a gender and age dependent phenomenon (*Eccleston, 2010; Reio & Forines, 2011*) and they are having mostly positive views (*Guralnick, 1994; Hilbert, 2014; Leyser & Kirk, 2004; Palmer et al., 2001; Peck et al., 2004; ElZein, 2009; Bradshaw et al., 2004*), which somehow varies with the degree of disability (*Anita et al., 2011; Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Odom et al.,2011; Theodorou & Nind, 2010*) of their children.

7.CONCLUSION:

This above study extensively explores all the views or comments of the differently abled students about all the stakeholders to realize their current situation in inclusive setting. The major issues of concern for them are lack of assistive device, large classroom, lack of participatory activities, lack of trained professional, methods of teaching, peer rejection, lack of trained professional and labeling. The differently abled ones are also hopeful about the positive sides like early identification, changing attitude of many, provision of trained staff and developing group mentality. It is very evident from their views that learning can be enhanced by clearly organizing objectives, proper assessment and continuous feedback (*Pandit et al., 2017*). Children with differently abled must have access to educational opportunities because they can gain the knowledge and abilities needed to live independent and fulfilled lives. Education can enable individuals to realize their full potential, make a constructive contribution to society and make a future for all irrespective of their abilities.

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