

Assessment of Children with Special Needs: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Inclusive Education is one of the internationally emerging concepts in education. It makes an effort to bring equity, justice, and quality education to all children. Inclusive education gives opportunity to bridge the gap among normal and children with disabilities across the world. Inclusive education aligns the educational system by bringing the children with special needs in normal school system. Assessment of the children for overall development in general and academic development in particular is very important to design the future educational structure. In order to assess the children with special needs, a number of challenges are being faced. This paper is an effort to examine the issues and challenges faced by the teachers while assessing the children with special needs in inclusive education system. The present study has adopted the exploratory method of research by exploring the existing literature to accomplish the objectives.

Keywords: *Assessment, Children with special needs, Inclusive Education, Issues and Challenges.*

Introduction

Inclusion is the process of educating all children in one educational setting irrespective of any differences. Inclusion in education means that children with special needs attend schools with normal students. Inclusion is thus the process of addressing the needs of all children irrespective of any disabilities. Children with special needs include students with physical, behavioural or any kind of mild or moderate form of disability and giftedness. So, inclusive school includes the changes in the content and teaching strategies in order to educate all children under one roof. It also makes teacher to adapt various strategies to assess the diverse learners in his class. Assessment of children with special needs is a challenging task especially for regular classroom teacher. Assessment is the process of collecting the information about the student's achievement and performance in the class. It is the process which reveals student's progress i.e., what student has understood, what he knows, and what he is capable of doing. In comparison to assessment, evaluation is the

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judgement about the quality and worth of response or performance based on some pre-determined criteria or standards. Weber in 1994 asserted that assessment is the most important tool for children with special needs for determining the eligibility for programmes and services. It measures achievement and focus new directions for instruction (Hall et al., 2004; Sindelar et al., 2006; Tindal et al., 2003). In inclusive educational setting, teachers are under pressure about the assessment of children with special needs and improving them academically.

METHODOLOGY

Exploratory method of research has been adopted by exploring the existing literature related to the theme of the study.

Issues and Challenges in Assessing Children with Special Needs

The assessment of children with special needs is challenging as well as difficult process. Teachers in inclusive classroom setting face numerous types of challenges to obtain quality assessment results. In inclusive education setting, children with special needs may also find normal methods of assessment difficult and discouraging due to their special and unique needs. They might have problem in writing their answer scripts in allotted period, with sitting still for a long period of time and some may find it difficult to understand the requirement of the test. Fanuel et. al., (2015) in his research study mentioned that teachers in inclusive education have to face number of issues in the assessment of children with special needs because technically inclusive educational system needs distinctive and special skills, competences, expertise staffs. While discussing issues faced in assessing children with special needs J. Ven (2011) insisted that many teachers have negative personal experience about assessment which influences their perspective of assessment in classroom. As every child in inclusive setting is unique and needs special consideration to their situations. In inclusive educational environment some teachers are of the opinion that they did not get sufficient help from their co-teacher while making the assessment (Fanuel et al., 2015). This makes it evident that proper collaboration between general education teacher and special education teacher affects the process of assessment of children with special needs. General education and special education teacher usually fail to collaborate effectively to coordinate the general grading system with the accommodations and modifications required under individualised educational policy. In fact, when the teacher wants to do grading system on individualised educational plan for the children with special needs, the teachers doesn't know how to do it; the teacher lacks the knowledge of individualised grading system (Munk and Bursuck, 2003, p.1). According to Koretz, M. D, 2003, the issues related to

assessment of children with special needs in inclusive educational system are issues of identification and classification, questions about the appropriate use of accommodations, the problems of disabilities that are related to measured construct and issues pertaining to test design. The attitude of teacher is crucial for inclusive assessment. Sharma Umesh et.al., 2009 in his study mentioned, teachers have negative attitude towards inclusion of children with disabilities in their class. Teachers were holding negative attitude towards pupils with disabilities. The negative attitudes appeared as obstacle to school's commitment for providing effective inclusion. A strong opposition from parents to practice inclusion was also observed. Glazzard (2011). Kuyini Ab, Desa. I (2017) mentioned children with special needs are being formally assessed like those of normal children in inclusive educational settings, which results in children with special needs being denied the right to benefit from the available accommodations including specialised teaching and modified examination plans. This makes children with special needs to struggle with normal traditional curriculum and examinations.

Smith, Polloway, Patton, and Dowdr in their book teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings (2015) have mentioned that educators must consider issues related to cultural diversity when working with elementary age students with special needs. As India is multilingual country, so it's important to assess the children especial with learning disability in the mother tongue (Kohli, Sharma and Panday, 2018). But most of the assessment tools used for assessment of children with learning disability lack well established norms for all subsets also the available assessment tools have not included all the age groups which makes assessment difficult especially for higher classes.

CONCLUSION

The assessment of children with special needs is a genuinely rooted issue and challenges start from basic policies related to the proper implementation of inclusive education system which includes lack of proper training of teachers to teach in inclusive educational settings and lack of proper special education teacher's support in dealing with the children with special needs. Galevska Natasha Angeloska and Pesic Milena Ilic (2018) in his study found that "Teachers in the educational process have difficulty in their efforts to assess the knowledge accurately and adequately when it comes to students with special educational needs, especially those involved in the inclusive classrooms. In the absence of specialized policies and recommendations, many teachers apply informal, individual assessment and adaptations to students with disabilities." Fanuel RG et al., (2015) in his study mentioned that proper framework must be in place to protect the children with special needs from social stigma, prejudice, and from being neglected. The children with special needs can only reach their individual maximum potential in life only if the problems of assessment of the learners are to be effectively dealt. A variety of issues has

been discussed with regard to the assessment of students with special needs. Finding a solution to these challenges will enable assessment process to achieve its potential to prove itself an essential element in the teaching and learning process. Researchers may also come up with suggestion having direct implementation for teachers also they should find new ways of incorporating their research findings into new policies and procedures. The objective is to develop assessment as a tool to assist and guide teachers to help students with special needs to learn, develop, accomplish and progress to the greatest extent possible.

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