

21st Century Education: Inclusion in the Classroom**Dr. Ravikiran.B**Principal National B.Ed College
Kalaburgi (KARANATAKA)**Abstract**

This paper examined parameters and opportunities for learners with special educational needs in an effective inclusive education as it relates to 21st century. It differentiated inclusive education from mainstreaming and integration and went further give a comprehensive meaning to the term inclusive education. Some of the benefits of this inclusive education are multicultural learning environment, socialization and the development of the child. Parameters identified for effective inclusive education are placing the child in age appropriate grade place, no special classes or schools and cooperative learning practiced where teachers can share ideas for improvement of the educational system. Conclusion was made on the need for inclusive education

Introduction

Prior to the new wave of inclusive practice and education, students were segregated into classrooms that were based on disabilities, social-emotional needs, and behavior disorders. These classrooms were called special day classes (SDCs), which prevented students from interacting with their peers, and prevented students from learning important social skills that would essential and necessary in the real world (outside of the educational setting). While SDC classrooms still exist (sometimes out of an inability to evolve, and sometimes out of necessity), many schools are beginning to push a new method of education called inclusion.

In the twenty-first century, a human-rights movement began sweeping the educational system as a whole. Produced from this movement came 'inclusive practices'. "Inclusive practices is founded on the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into their school learning communities, usually in general education classrooms, and that their instruction should be based on their abilities, not their disabilities" (Friend 5). In such a mainstreamed environment, students with

disabilities would be given the opportunity to interact alongside their peers while continuing to receive special educational support.

While educators are still unsettled as to what the implications of such an integration may be, many educators, researchers, and policymakers have designed practices regarding inclusion that prove effective in the daily lives of these students. Here, we examine the practices regarding inclusion in general education classrooms and the support provided that allows us to see why such mainstreaming is important for students with disabilities and students with non-disabilities alike.

Resisting Inclusive Practices In Educational Settings

Although not all educators are onboard with inclusion in their classrooms, for the most part such inclusive practices are considered valuable experiences for all students who learn in such an environment. "Results of a number of studies have indicated that most teachers are opposed to mainstreaming" (Fox). One of the reasons educators resist this universal change is because it requires an extra effort on their part to ensure such an integration happens smoothly. This extra effort includes much

more collaboration and cooperation between general educators and special educators.

Many secondary educators argue that, “(a) The discrepancy between the minimum levels of academic skills required for success in a general classroom and those possessed by students with mild academic disabilities is greater at the secondary than at the elementary level,” and, “(b) Integration would require significant structural changes in the secondary school environment” (Fox).

Incorporating inclusive practices within the classroom would require that they spend more time planning and coordinating their efforts with special education teachers. However, most teachers have already implemented many of the teaching strategies that inclusion embraces. Even though inclusion is often a frustrating topic at the higher levels of education, educators should realize that it is their duty to teach all forms of students, from general education students to students who require special education.

Conditions To Facilitate Inclusive Practice

If it is suggested that inclusive practices would be beneficial for students with disabilities, “Promoting Inclusive Practices” offers several conditions that should be met so that the students gain a greater overall experience of the educational system. Such suggestions include, but are not limited to, “an opportunity for pupil participation in the decision-making process; a positive attitude about the learning abilities of all pupils; teacher knowledge about learning difficulties; skilled application of specific instructional methods; and parent and teacher support” (Tilstone 22).

Also offered in “Towards Inclusive Schooling” is a list of several conditions that facilitate schools in moving toward inclusive practices: “develop effective methods of communication; collect information to inform decision making; link plans to the overall vision of the school future; and emphasize

classroom partnerships” (Ainscow 3). Out of all these suggestions, I feel that the collection of information to inform decision making is most important. It is extremely important to provide adequate information to show how, what, and why you are doing what you do in the classroom. When it comes to inclusive practices, none could be greater than obtaining such information.

As educators study their students, they will develop their own methodology of inclusive practices. With the proper approach to such practices, both the lives of the general education students and the lives of the special education students should be improved significantly; if not on an academic level, then most certainly on a social level. After all, what are we, if not beings of social interaction?

The Need For Inclusion In The Classroom

Despite the controversy of inclusion in the secondary educational systems, one thing remains certain: inclusive practices benefit those students who have disabilities. While some studies of social and academic benefits of integration suggest that the academia of students with special needs are hardly impacted through mainstream education, it should be noted that the students’ social lives were greatly impacted. “Children with SLD are, at the very least, no worse off academically, and have the opportunity to participate in mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships with peers” (Tilstone 21).

Even though “Promoting Inclusive Practice” suggests that it would be at the child’s benefit for the school systems to adopt a form of inclusion into the curriculum, the author notes that not all students will be ready for inclusive practices. There are still many students with special needs who will need to be taught lessons not provided in the national curriculum for general education.

As educators, it is our duty to collect this data and provide adequate means of developing the inclusion process. I think we

can all agree, on a social level at least, that inclusive practices benefit both the general education student and those students who require special education. In a world that is slowly becoming unified, I believe that inclusive practices will someday be a commonality in the classroom. Remember, it is the acceptance of difference that is the hallmark of inclusive practice.

Bibliography

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