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Inclusion and Equity: A Paradox in Education

Dr. Reema Lamba*

ABSTRACT

India has come a long way in terms of its approaches and policies for persons with disabilities, but is it on papers or happening effectively on the ground level, is a question that needs to be addressed. Is it happening in metropolitan cities or even beyond is a question to be probed into. Has passage of numerous laws lead to improvement in quality of education or is it a paradox and continues as quantification in education. This paper has tried to analyse these few issues related to inclusion in urban and peri urban schools of West Delhi. It draws from the unpublished doctoral research that involved study of various inclusive schools in Delhi. The peri urban schools of West Delhi were added to appraise the current situation. The delimitations and entangled issues in making school ecologies responsive towards the diverse learners have been underlined through the conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO has outlined four pillars of learning and reshaping education. These are:

Learning to know: to provide the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning.

Learning to do: to provide the skills that would enable individuals to effectively participate in the global economy and society.

Learning to be: to provide self analytical and social skills to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential psycho-socially, affectively as well as physically, for an all-round complete person.

Learning to live together: to expose individuals to the values implicit within human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable individuals and societies to live in peace and harmony.

If we take a closer view, interestingly inclusive education facilitates all the above. Inclusive education provides equitable opportunities to be able to understand the world, develop skills to be productive members of society and appreciate respect and understanding for all. Hence if all schools function in keeping with UNESCO pillars of education, the systems would be responsive to needs of one and all.

The government has been vociferously supporting inclusion through various policies and programmes namely, RTE (2009) and Right to PWD Act (2016) being the latest in the offing. Let us understand the situation better by taking a closer view of the Right to PWD Act (2016). Following are some of the provisions that the Act has outlined for the school systems:

- Admission without any discrimination.
- Provision of educational opportunities, sports and recreation activities equally with others.
- Making school campus and various facilities accessible.
- Providing necessary support individualized or otherwise in environments that maximize academic and social development consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

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- Ensure that the education to children who are blind or deaf or both is imparted in the most appropriate languages, modes and means of communication.
- Detect specific learning disabilities in children at the earliest and take suitable pedagogical and other measures to overcome them.
- Monitor participation, progress in terms of attainment levels and completion of education in respect of every student with disability.

But what have been the ground realities is interesting to probe within urban and peri-urban context. The objectives of this paper were

- To identify changes brought in school ecologies to be responsive towards diverse learners.
- To gain insight into innovative pedagogical practices in select junior classrooms.

METHOD

The schools in the urban and peri urban West Delhi region providing integrated/inclusive services to children with diverse needs enlisted through snow ball sampling technique formed the sample universe of the study. Fifteen schools were identified as providing a range of services to children with a diverse need and became the sample for this study. The different schools identified were visited to understand the school ecologies in terms of educational provisions for children with diverse needs. Provisions elaborated in PWD Act (2016) along with UNESCO four pillars of learning were used as guidelines for assessing the systems.

A proforma was prepared to gather general information about the school, nature of the educational provisions, funding and admission policy. Interviews of administrative heads or teachers and children were conducted to gather information on the existing spectrum of services in the junior wings of these schools. These were supported by one or two observations of the educational programmes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is a brief description of how school ecologies were made more responsive for children with diverse needs:

- **Admission Policy**

The act says admission without any discrimination. However, in reality almost all schools were screening the students, the criterion though varied. Some were interviewing parents and making observations of the children. This was further supported by documents from practitioners detailing the special needs and adaptations required. A few schools had a special educator to coordinate the admissions of CWSN. However, the unsaid bottom line was children with mild special needs needing little or no adaptation be considered. Others were referring CWSN to certified institutions or practitioners outside the school. The students with mild special needs were reported to be admitted to the regular class. However, those with moderate to severe impairments were either refused admission or placed in the special unit within the regular school.

- **Diversity of Learners**

The number of children with a special need being addressed at the regular schools was insignificant in comparison to the total student population in almost all the schools observed. The percentage was as less as 0.2% to 8%. These observations and numbers are of the junior wing of the schools observed. The special needs were largely loco-motor, sensory and specific learning disabilities. Interestingly, in a sample of fifteen schools; in three peri-urban schools children with mild-moderate learning disabilities were observed in the system against only four schools in the urban set up. The law says that Persons with benchmark

disabilities would be defined as those with at least 40% of any of the list of disabilities. The list outlined in Right to PWD Act (2016) has been expanded from 7 to 21 conditions and it now also includes cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders such as haemophilia, thalassemia, and sickle cell anaemia, and multiple disabilities. However the students visible in the schools were only children with hearing impairment, speech and language disability or specific learning disability.

- **Adaptations in School Ecologies**

The school ecologies have been discussed in terms of physical environment and provision and accommodations for a better learning environment. Discussing the physical environment, the situation was ramps and guide rails in only six schools. Also these ramps were not in all places within the school. A few places had been connected with elevators. None of the schools had made their campus and various other facilities accessible for all despite the act commanding the same. It also states provision of educational opportunities, sports and recreation activities equally with others. It was observed that schools were making efforts to involve students' academically. Ten, of the total sample were also including students for music and theatrical performances. But none of the schools were observed to involve in sports activities.

- **Innovative Pedagogical Practices**

Pedagogical practices in the various schools were screened using the four pillars of education as outlined by UNESCO. These were:

Learning to Know: Three schools had a low teacher student ratio. Here teachers were flexible and supportive. Five were using computers, peer aide to help CWSN better comprehend the world around.

Learning to Do: Developmentally appropriate practices were followed in the junior wing of two schools. Four schools were following lesson plans based on multiple intelligences. In these schools teachers were willing to put in extra hours, experiment or innovate within class. Child to child learning was also observed being followed in eight schools.

Learning to Be: In two schools, in a few classrooms teachers were observed to use natural environment and personal experiences to help students reflect and learn. Children were encouraged to work in small groups and learn by doing.

Learning to Live Together: Interestingly value education and mutual respect was embraced and reinforced in ten schools.

On a positive note, it was observed that schools were trying to experiment various pedagogies and teaching learning materials to facilitate student's understanding of the world. Also most schools were trying to sensitize peers and teachers towards children with diverse needs. However the two other pillars namely; learning to be and learning to do was observed on a smaller scale in a few schools. The CWSN in urban schools had more opportunities for innovations and experimentation than in peri urban schools that followed the traditional chalk and talk method and teacher centered classes. In only school, one teacher was observed to be very sensitive. She was observed to use local indigenous materials in teaching learning, would experiment a lot. Her enthusiasm and belief in the child seemed to cushion the impact of disability for the child and all other children seemed involved in joyful learning in her class. There were no uniformities or universal patterns observed across schools in how to make learning environment accessible for students. Each school was trying to create conditions based on their resources, demands and commitments towards inclusive philosophy. The passage of law did not seem to have rippled down on ground realities as the

approach was obligatory and not mandatory. The schools doing little also felt they were taking big steps and were boastful to have the students with disabilities in the school with them. However, shouldn't they introspect that is this enough? Are the children with special needs happy but for that matter are children in general joyfully engaged in schools?

Summing it up, one can say that it is important to reflect and remind ourselves that a school responsive to needs of one and all is not an obligation but a norm. Laws have been put in place to facilitate it, but embracing the change is the need of the hour and that has to come from within. One has to begin being inclusive consciously till it becomes our habit.


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A Ball Can Change the Game: Breaking Gender Stereotypes Through Sports

Dr. Reema Lamba*

ABSTRACT

Balls are for boys and dolls for girls. Boys play and girls cheer as audience. Isn't this how we groom our daughters? It is time we rethink! Girls are always evaluated on the yardstick of gender stereotypes as good girl or bad girl. The visual imagery of good girl being the one who is delicate, shy, gentle and soft spoken; while traits like strong, loud and outspoken are associated with bad girls. This grooming begins very early in life and the society encourages compliance to these gendered practices. This article has tried to question such practices. In fact it has tried to highlight how sports can be used as a tool for breaking gender stereotypes besides encouraging leadership among them. Let us set the ball rolling to break gender stereotypes and level the playfield for the girls for a better society.

Keywords: Leadership, Sports, Gender stereotypes, barriers

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning girls and boys are socialized differently; in fact, the divide of 'blue' and 'pink' starts from the cradle of the child. This divide is then transferred to each and every event that takes place in the lives of children. Gradually girls more or less internalize their position as an inferior sex. Gendered statements like, "Don't throw the ball like a girl" to a boy who throws gently, or "Basketball, no, no I can't play this. It is for boys!" by a girl are so common that we don't even take cognizance about these. What do we really mean by such statements? Do we really think girls can't play sports? Or that they are not made to play one?

On the contrary, sports for girl means emancipation, breaking free of all gendered shackles and leading towards a better society. This is the underlining assumption of this article.

Research (Sabo&Veliz, 2008) has pointed that the rate of girls dropping out of sports is approximately twice the rate of boys at the age of 14years which increases sharply between adolescent years. In the Indian context this gender proportion is more skewed to the extent of girls being absent or marginal. The Government policies and programmes have favoured the girl child through initiatives like *Balika Samriddhi Yojna*, *Kishori Shakti Yojna*, *Ladli scheme* etc. A flagship program of India, called the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) caters to women and girl child as their main target groups. These examples signify the importance that the country places on development of girl child in society. Even the logo of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* of our country has an image of both 'boy' and 'girl' riding their way to education. Yet girls continue to be on the fringes of scholastic activities and marginal in sports arenas. If we want ground reality to align with policies on paper, we need to understand the barriers to their participation, to be able to chalk out a road map for their success.

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WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

In the Indian context, as research points the barriers are more to do with cultural norms or socio-psychological issues than structural provisions. Some of the key barriers highlighted in various studies are:

- **Cultural practices and Gender stereotypes-** Predominantly patriarchal nature of Indian society never encouraged sports for women (Spencer, 1894). The paper pointed that notion of sports being a masculine profession denied women to be a part of it. Sports were perceived to diminish a feminine exterior, developing a robust physique, considered undesirable by the society. What was true in 1894, still seems to reverberate in the millennial India. The myths like sports affecting menstrual cycle, child-birth and other related to appearance of women still continue somewhere unanswered in the Indian psyche. Gender roles and division of work also push women towards domestic chores which is not negotiable.
- **Internalized Gender Stereotypes-** From birth the girls are groomed to prioritise family and household chores, to study and stay within the safe zones of home. These are internalized so deep in the psyche of the girls that sports puts them in an unsafe or unsettled zone. They fear that their involvement in sports would have damaging impact on their family and relationships or lead to neglect of their children. They lack self-confidence, fear judgment of being too self-centered and not caring for family if they play sports and hence don't step out to participate (Layak & Indulekha, 2015).
- **Structural barriers and little or no say-** The institutional practices of how sports are managed also limit women's options and opportunities. The legacy of discrimination most of the time means that women are less likely than men to have the education, networks or resources needed to become effective leaders. It is clearly reflected in the figures that women board members of national sport federations in India are less than 10% of the total strength (Schoenberg, 2017). They have little or no say and there is lack of gender equality in sports governance (Ahmed, 2015). This is further affected due to under investment in women sports at most levels.
- **Safety and transportation issues-** Sports mostly requires long practice hours and grounds/ places for which long travel may be needed. This creates issues related to safety of women on streets, public transport, in and around the parks or sports grounds. Such concerns to quote bind the girls. In Muslim communities the dress code in a few sports also is a barrier that prevents their participation.
- **Lack of Positive Role Models-** Even in today's world there is objectification of women's body. There is preoccupation with ideal women body as lean and petite and not that of a strong, confident athletic role model. The girls fear to break stereotypes and usually adhere to larger norms. In the absence of encouragement to participate in sports and healthy physical activity, the results may lead girls to drop out altogether.

WHY THEY SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Researches have clearly pointed the uncountable benefits of participation in sports. Benefits ranging from good health to breaking gender stereotypes and development of leadership skills.

- **Health Benefits-** Engagement in sports improves physical activity, improves muscle tone, health and specifically provides protection against cardiovascular disease (Goyal, 2006). Research (Staurowsky et al, 2009) has pointed that girls active in sports during adolescence and young adulthood are 20% less likely to get breast cancer later in life.

- **Self Confidence and Positive image of Self-** Sports participation helps enhance their self-image. (Burton,2017) Players enjoy the game oblivious of their body type.
- **Break Gender Stereotypes-** Studies have shown how sports can be used as a powerful tool for challenging social norms and furthering developmental goals (UNDP,2015). The studies have pointed how sports are fun and create opportunities and spaces where people feel comfortable to ask questions, share opinions including questioning stereotypes.
- **Leadership Skills-** Burton(2017) pointed that through sports, girls learn important life skills such as teamwork, leadership and confidence. While playing sports one has to rapidly process information, quickly and strategically take decisions. Successful communication, ideas to motivate team, self -discipline are assets achieved through sports playfully.

How can we involve them: Addressing the Barriers and Challenges

To bring about a change in female sport participation in India, participation barriers and opportunities for growth, require attention and action. While some nations have made progress in advancing the women's sport agenda, substantial work remains globally and in India specifically (Fink, 2015; Ahmed,2015). "The participation of women and girls in sport challenges gender stereotypes and discrimination, and can therefore be a vehicle to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls", as pointed out in United Nations report can be the guiding force for us. Presence of women in sports, performance at par with men will help break the way we imagine a women. Sampling cases of success of women as sports person would help break old stereotypes and rebuild right attitudes towards their abilities and potentials.

This is the beginning which needs to be supported by awareness campaigns that focus on changing mindsets in our communities about the various myths and prejudices surrounding sports and what girls can achieve through it. A dialogue once initiated would gradually bring about the change in perceptions towards women in our society. This needs to be supported by provisions of safe public spaces for girls to play. The schools would also have to play a significant role in catalyzing this change. To accelerate the process the government needs to work out a consistent and financially feasible pathway.

CONCLUSION

India needs a change, a change that is not intended for a few girls who are in the mainstream but for the large masses of invisible section of girl population who is deprived of development and participation. As parents we may need to begin from our home and from inside as we may not always be fully aware of what biases we might be subconsciously carrying into what we do or how we bring up our children. As society we need to question our beliefs and push our girls harder to play sports, encourage them to be a leader to compensate for all the years we have pushed them inside the house, to be a follower. It may need a committed and holistic approach to break gender stereotypes in sports and to level the playfield for our daughters. So let us set the ball rolling.

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Grandparenting Children with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The birth of a child is a cherished moment that brings families together to welcome the new entrant and celebrate new bonds as parents, grandparents or great grandparents. There is an imagery of a perfect grandchild and members look forward to this moment with hope for future. Birth of a grandchild with disability or detection of special needs in the grandchild may elicit different overwhelming emotions in different families. Many may feel dreams of a star grandchild shattered but a few may cope. In cases wherein the grandparents realise that every star twinkles differently, they are able to turn around the situation positively. The article has tried to highlight this heterogeneity of grandparent relations with a grandchild with disability. Better understanding and acceptance of grandchild's disability have been identified as aspects that can lead to mutual well-being and contentedness.

Keywords: Grandparent, Children with disability, Grandchild, Coping, Acceptance

INTRODUCTION

Birth of a grandchild is a source of immense pleasure for any grandparent. In the Indian context grandparent involvement in upbringing children, especially in joint/extended families is immense. Whenever parents are unable to provide care for their children due to reasons as work, health or other factors, grandparents pitch in. In fact not only in India, research studies across cultures have reported grandparents as playing important roles in supporting and/or complementing the child care provisions (Coall & Hertwig, 2010; Coall, Hilbrand, Sear, & Hertwig, 2018; Shwalb & Hossain, 2017). Extensive research in West and Indian context has shown the positive impact of grandparents especially grandmothers on the grandchild's survival, growth and development (Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2018; Coall & Hertwig, 2010). This support is of immense importance when the grandchild has a special need. However, many times the grandparents are not able to accept disability in their grandchild or may be anxious or have feelings of being powerless when the question is how to guide and support their grandchild. The article has tried to give insights into the emotions grandparents may experience and if they are able to give in their best shot, how mutual love, long lasting relation and contentedness may develop.

GRANDPARENTS EMOTIONAL JOURNEY ON DIAGNOSIS OF DISABILITY IN THE GRANDCHILD

Researches on disability had earlier focused on how parents undergo a range of emotions on birth of a child with disability transcending from anger to denial to acceptance (Kandel et al,2005). Very few researches (Strom,1997; Lumby,2005) have focused on the emotional journey a grandparent may experience on birth of a grandchild with disability. These studies describe "the double grief" they experience for both, their own child and the grandchild. They may experience transitory emotions

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ranging between anger, anxiety on what the future holds for the child and/or acceptance. In a few cases a sense of pride has also been reported. This is usually a feeling of pride when their children accept this challenge and their grandchild is able to achieve the unexpected.

Only a handful of studies have been done to discuss the grandparent's role in upbringing children with disabilities. One such study by Scherman et. al (1995) had collected data from grandparents of children with spina bifida telephonically. The study had highlighted the adjustment process the grandparents go through, beginning from grief to providing support to their children and grandchild and holding the family together in such times. Study by Mirfin-Veitch et al.(1997) pointed that grandparental inability to provide support was not determined by the grandchild's disability but more due to pre-existing family relationship dynamics. Yet another study by Coall(2010) pointed at the grandparents role in protecting their child and the grandchild. The study pointed at the painful experience of grandparents, ranging from anger on the breaking of news to adjusting to diagnosis and acting to support. The feelings of sadness reported were more for the child not being able to achieve than to do with societal responses.

Literature, though very limited, has pointed that despite occasions of fear and doubt, grandparents reported the grandchild with disability as a source of well-being and joy. How the grandparents cope with the situation positively or negatively will facilitate family to adapt and acquire skills to help daily care and maintain well-being.

The researches have pointed that grandparents' support and involvement is promoted when they have access to accurate information regarding their grandchild's disability, experience good communication with their adult child, and there is residential proximity.

How can grandparents be involved?

There are no clearly defined roles or set patterns on how grandparents can support. However, studies (Barranti,1985) have pointed that grandparent involvement in upbringing eases parental workload and has positive outcome for the grandchild. Although learning about the special needs may be sometimes challenging for the grandparents but using their wisdom and patience they may be able to relate with their grandchild better than the hurried and overstressed parent. Some of the roles illustrated in the various researches are as follows.

- **Stress buffer-** Grandparents are a source of unconditional love and acceptance for the grandchild who is often going from one therapy or session to the other. The special gestures and moments with grandparents buffers the grandchild's distress.
- **Surrogate Parent-** Grandparents provide child care, arrange for transportation and support for therapy sessions. If need be they engage in teaching their grandchildren skills using various strategies. In a few cases grandparents may also provide financial support to cover expenses for their grandchild's therapies or other special needs
- **Models and Mentors-** Grandparents are powerful role models for their grandchildren who learn both attitudes and values by watching. More importantly they always have more time than parents besides profound experience from which the grandchildren benefit.
- **Nursing and Therapies-** In case of a grandchild with disability, the parents are most of the time concerned about medical needs of the child. Grandparents with a caring aptitude and interest not only nurse this grandchild but also learn regular therapies and provide support when needed.

Hence the kind of support grandparent can offer varies. The variations are based on grandparents' characteristics as well. These include their age, whether young active or very old adults. The grandparent response is also dependent on health condition, gender and education status. Grand parenting a grandchild with special need is a demanding and exhaustive work, but at the same time it leads to

long lasting relation and gives grandparents a renewed sense of purpose, keeps them on toes and young.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a grandparent offers an exciting opportunity of growth and change. It is a beginning to experience a very special relationship. However, birth of a grandchild with disability may many a times shatter their grand parenting related dreams or ideas. Different grandparents respond differently to this painful experience. All those who are able to empower themselves with knowledge are not only able to accept disability but also turn around the situation for better, where everyone wins in terms of well-being and contentedness.

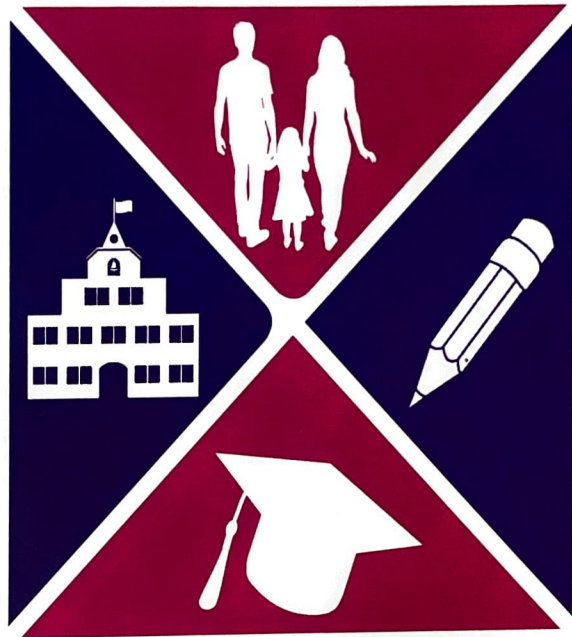
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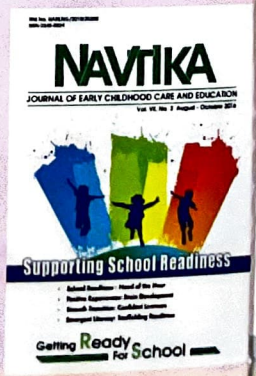
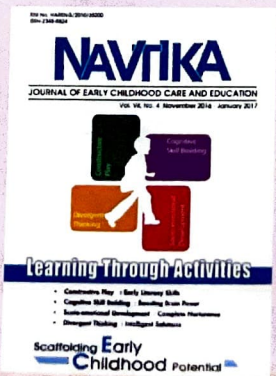
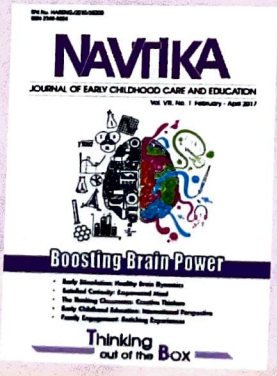
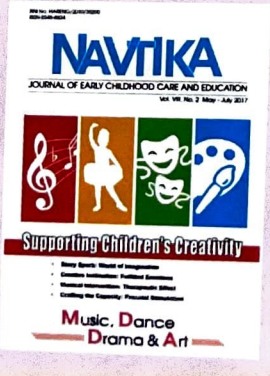
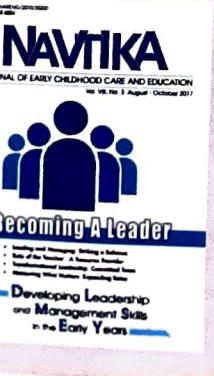
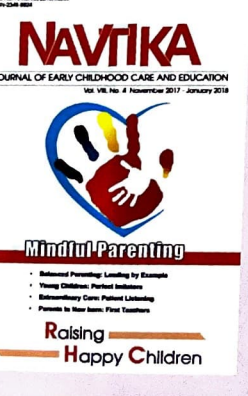
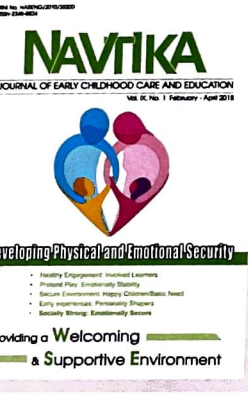
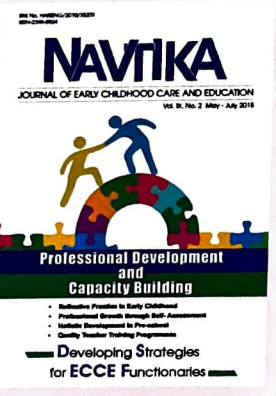
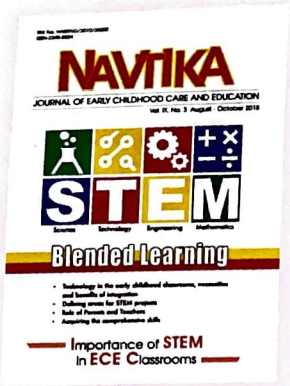
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- Family Engagement - Transforming the Slow- Learners to Learn Slowly
- Engaging Families in Children's Literacy Development
- Teacher and Parent Partnership- From Patrons to Partners
- Bonding for life through Collaboration, Cohesion and Cooperation

— Family Engagement in
Early Childhood Centres —



NAVTIKA

JOURNAL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Navtika is a journal that serves as a practical guide for teachers, parents and other caregivers who manage children between 0 to 6 years. It seeks to inform, deepen knowledge and address parental concerns, empowering them to deliver better care. The journal publishes original work based on standards of excellence and expert views. The articles are interesting insights into various aspects of children's well being.

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FROM THE

EDITOR'S DESK

India is a country of diversified family structure, multi-cultural milieu and manifests paradox of values and expectations. It is the responsibility of the community to meet the challenges and successfully help the young generation in the process of acculturation. The key for a successful nation is the level of parental involvement which is the corner-stone in a child's education. The home and school are the prominent microsystems in a child's life. Events in one microsystem affect the other microsystems, influencing the final behavioural output. It is essential that the parents and the care givers plan a trajectory that promotes overall well-being of the students.

When parents work in cohesion with the educational institutions, they are able to understand the point of view of the educationists and psychologists. When they say that slow parenting style has a positive impact on the children's holistic development, as it allows the children to mindfully savour a few experiences rather than rush through a myriad of activities. Whereas, in helicopter parenting, the parents micro-manage the children's lives by organizing a lot of structured activities including day care, crèche and after school music / sports classes. The result is that a growing number of children are experiencing incremental difficulties in coping with action –packed daily schedule, burden of parental expectations and peer pressure.

Many programmes and mobile applications are initiated to empower parents and family members with the knowledge and skill to promote their child's growth and social-emotional development as well as attend to their own mental well-being.

The mandate of the day is professional proficiency besides the pedagogical knowledge. The responsibility is entrusted upon the collaborative efforts of the parents and school to help children understand the value of FAMILY ('Father and Mother I love You'). They also need to appreciate the significance of SCHOOL which stands for: Scholastic Support, Ceaseless Collaboration, Harmonious Development, Objective Observations and Lucid learning. This partnership will bring out desirable transformation in a child's life and help overcome the challenges in times ahead.

Dr. (Mrs.) Indu Khetarpal
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Starting Slow is Still a Start

Transforming the Slow Learners

to Learn Slowly

Dr. Reema Lamba

ABSTRACT

Families play a vital role in children's well-being and development and their role is more imperative in case of a child with diverse needs. The birth of a child with diverse ability receives mixed responses in different families ranging from denial, rejection to acceptance and positive engagement. The paper has tried to highlight what are effective family engagements and how the parent's behaviour and attitude impacts children's development especially with developmental delays.

Introduction

When a parent has a child with developmental delays, it automatically means a different life style for everyone in the family. We talk a lot about their delay in achieving milestones. The fact that goes unnoticed is that a neuro-typical child, often goes through 'stages'. Numerous researches have repeatedly highlighted the significant role played by families in a child's development and wellness. Parents are usually the child's first teachers and also probably the ones who mentor their children for the longest span, encouraging and supporting their ward's academic achievement and overall development. Parenting and family engagement thus is central and not adjunct to a child's development. Now let us understand what is an effective family engagement in the context of children with diverse abilities.

Family engagement refers to the way a child's adult caregiver (biological parent, foster parent, siblings, grandparents, etc) effectively supports learning and development. It includes arousing children's attention, curiosity, motivation,

repetition and addressing wide range of interests. It involves meaningful participation with children across daily routines, activities. Identifying challenges and addressing wide range of interests and personal styles to ensure joyful learning. Family engagement is an empowering process wherein the parents are able to understand the important role they can play in their child's learning and development.



**My teacher makes me a day-dreamer
and a night thinker too!**

As different families are unique, the process of family engagement should be unique to each family. The birth of a child with diverse needs may evoke different emotions as shock, denial, anxiety, fear or despair. The parents are

overwhelmed not only by the birth of the child with disabilities but also by the enormous challenges that they have to face (Ravindranadan V. 2007). A recent research shows that caring for a child with a disability poses multiple challenges for parents such as :

- Additional financial burden for treating their child's condition or for dealing with the child's problematic behaviour.
- Social stigma associated with disabilities (Baker & Heller, 1996; Lecavalier, Leone, & Wiltz, 2006).
- In the context of raising a child with a disability, a few studies show that parents with greater social support show more positive parenting behaviours (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002) and lower levels of parenting stress (Smith, Oliver, & Innocenti, 2001).

The impact will also depend on the type of special need, nature and extent of support required and coping mechanisms of the family. The well-being of the family thus depends on factors such as social, physical and psychological well-being of parents and the nature of the special needs of the child. However, it is important to understand that the presence of a child with diverse abilities or developmental delays in the family may not always be a source of sorrow! Some studies indicate that their parenting experiences of parents give them a new perspective to recognize and appreciate diversity. A healthy family engagement teaches them not to enforce restrictions on individuals or tell them what they can or cannot do. Instead, parents should help children to strive for self-improvement. Children with diverse abilities or developmental delays often exceed expectations and do not necessarily comply with what is typical of their diagnosis predicted by professionals.

The Difference Between Developmental Delay and Developmental Disability

Sometimes the terms 'developmental delay' and 'developmental disability' are used interchangeably. But actually they are not the same

thing. Although at times it becomes difficult to determine whether a young child has a delay or a disability.

Developmental disabilities are issues that children don't catch up initially, though they can make progress. They aren't the same as learning disabilities, but they can make learning more difficult. Some conditions that can cause developmental disabilities include Down Syndrome, Angelman Syndrome, Autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and Brain Injuries.

Developmental delays may be caused by short-lived issues, such as a speech delay being caused by hearing loss from ear infections or a somatic delay being caused by a long hospitalization. Delays may also be early signs of learning and attention issues. While it's not always clear what is causing the delay, early intervention can often help children cover up the delays. Some children suffer from developmental delays even when they reach school age. In such cases, special education services can be of immense help.

The parents might take the help of the ECE Centre and later consult a therapist for coping-up with the developmental delays. The specialist can evaluate and design the plan of action accordingly. They can also guide the parents and suggest ways to provide essential supports to the child.

A developmental delay means that a child does not reach certain milestones, such as the ability to roll over, sit up independently, walk, speak and interact that is considered age appropriate skills.

Now let us take a peek into what are some of the family engagements that contribute to the well-being of not only children with diverse needs but also the caregivers involved.

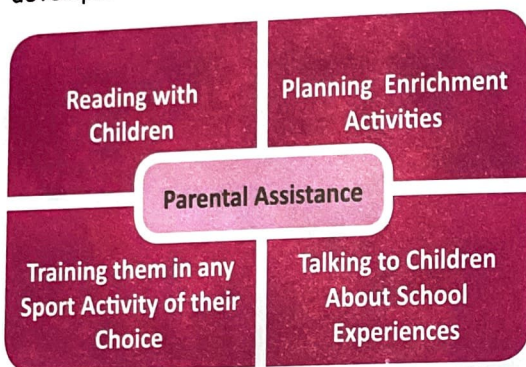
Effective/ Facilitative family engagement

Spirited family engagement plays a crucial role in promoting children's healthy development

and wellness. Research suggests that some of the positive outcomes of such engagements include greater interest in school, better attendance, enhanced teacher student relation and increased self-esteem.

Some of the bottlenecks for effective family engagement are lack of awareness among parents on ways of developing their children to their full potential and lack of support from school for children with diverse abilities. It is important to understand that positive family engagements don't just happen. They have to be planned and effectively worked out.

Parents don't have the necessary expertise to support their children with special needs. Schools need to synergistically work with parents for training and supporting them and seeking their support for children with developmental delays.



Some of the characteristics of parental engagement outlined to be impactful have been identified as reading with the children, organising enrichment activities, or encouraging the child to learn a sport, talking to children about school experiences and discussions on the child's overall development of (Baker,C.,2014,Epley,2013). Hence the progressive impact of family engagements of the children with diverse needs can be summed up as:

- Significant role in assessment and planning intervention: Parents are the best observers of their children's capabilities and limitations are crucial to planning interventions for children with diverse needs.

- Preparing Children for Challenges: Diversity in children often leads to challenges such as transportation arrangement, perceptions of teachers and peers, acceptance by neighbours or extended community. Parents and families play a significant role in preparing the child for these challenges.
- Positive Learning Environment: Positive learning environment is one in which the family is able to stimulate curiosity amongst children. Motivate the children and keep their needs and interests above all. Stress should be laid on facilitation not guidance.
- Setting Realistic Expectations: Frequent failures or negative perceptions and feedback can make children doubt their abilities. Too high expectations can cause stress. Engaged families help child scaffold by offering opportunities and by setting realistic goals and expectations.
- Promoting Self-Esteem: Parental acceptance or rejection is associated with psychological maladjustment among children. This is compounded by labeling and negative influences at school. An engaged family environment provides children an opportunity to talk it out and deal with failures without affecting their 'worthiness'.

Another important aspect of family engagement especially for children with diverse abilities is that the sooner the parents cope with stress and develop support systems, the earlier the intervention services will begin to promote learning.

Conclusion

Family engagement influences and is influenced by the child. Family provides consistent support to the child. The birth of a child with diverse needs/ developmental delays may evoke diverse responses. Keeping in mind the parent's mind frame or preparedness to deal with the challenge, these responses may be transient and may vary as the child develops. It is the dynamic inter-relation between the

different members that shapes the nature of family engagement. Sometimes positivity has to be embedded consciously to support the child. It not only facilitates the healthy development of the child but empowers the caregivers.

Parenting Tips

- Be judicious in scheduling age specific activities for your child.
- Set aside time to read stories together.
- Create regular opportunities for your child to play with friends and cousins.
- To create bonding time with grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins.
- Model how you expect your child to act.
- Give warmth, acceptance and respect to your child.
- Talk to your children about the events of the day. Tell them about the good things they did.

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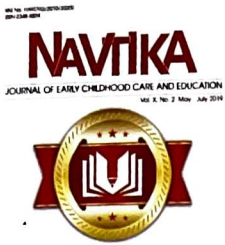


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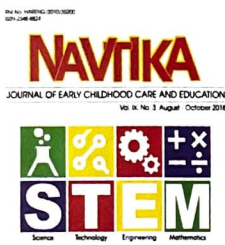
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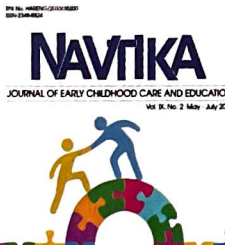
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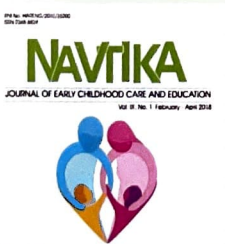
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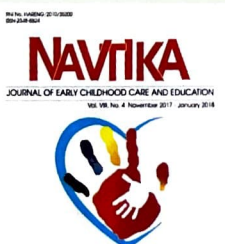
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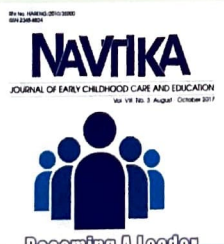
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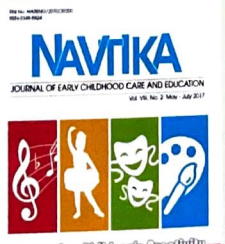
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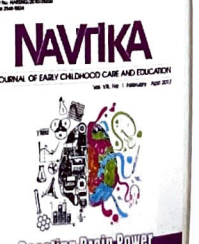
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Times have changed and so have children. Today's children mature early and have exposure to things beyond their age resulting in an 'I know it all' attitude. This has led to identity crisis and ego clashes in a world of cut throat competition. Psychologists and educationists attribute this to a number of factors and say that these get manifested into physical and psychological elements of an individual's personality.

Today's generation is witnessing an increasing impact of globalization on an individual and at the same time they are moving towards growing uncertainty. Most likely it results in stress. Youngsters, especially the teenagers, need to be equipped with adequate life- skills. They are worried about how they look, what people think and being accepted in the society. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the adults to build trust in them and make them more confident about themselves. Adults need to help the youngsters manage themselves emotionally and build up their inner strength to face the challenges appropriately.

The foundation of an individual's personal being is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to a person's beliefs about his/her own worth and value. Self-esteem is important because it influences people's choices and decisions. People with high self-esteem are people who are fairly well-motivated to take care of themselves and persistently strive towards the fulfillment of personal goals and aspirations. People with low self-esteem do not regard themselves as worthy of happy outcomes or capable of achieving their goals and so they tend to let important things slide, be less persistent and resilient in terms of overcoming adversity. They may have the same kind of goals as people with higher self-esteem, but they are generally less motivated to pursue them to the desired conclusion.

The images created by the society as to what is or isn't right have affected everyone in some manner, shape, or form. It can either pull you down or build you up. Society can be either a bully or a friend. Using it for motivation can be a great thing, but letting it control your self-worth, self-confidence, or self-esteem is not a healthy proposition.

The environment plays a vital role in making or breaking a person's self-image. Confidence can wax and wane throughout our lives. It is boosted when we experience success or receive appreciation. It goes down when our efforts fall short of the expectations and we are criticized or rejected by the people around us. We are human beings after all. It is therefore vital not to become excessively reliant on external affirmation to understand our self-worth. Rather one should be encouraged to take ownership for undertaking the worthwhile actions needed.

This issue of Navtika brings to you diverse researches and different perspectives for the stakeholders (teachers, parents, counsellors) engaged in raising today's generation and 'to instil in the child healthy self-esteem and confidence.

Dr. (Mrs.) Indu Khetarpal
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Developing Self Esteem in Children with Disabilities: Role of the Facilitator

Dr. Reema Lamba

ABSTRACT

The early years have important milestones and traits which equip the children with life skills that are instrumental in shaping their personality later on in life. Children develop the concept of 'self', their attitudes, abilities and attributes.

Around the age of 3 years, when they step into the outside world and get familiarised with specific nomenclatures such as 'child or adult', 'boy or girl', 'short or tall', 'good or bad', they develop an understanding of outside world.

Children who can cope with frustration and challenges are more likely to be successful and have a higher self-esteem. In contrast, children who become easily frustrated and discouraged, often quit or need extra assistance to complete a task.

Introduction

Positive self-esteem is important for everybody, irrespective of age and gender. Positive self-image makes one feel confident, happy and valuable. This helps them develop a positive mind-set towards life. Self-esteem makes one feel more valued and they believe that they have a positive role to play in the society.

Self-esteem is often the result of internalisation of tags given by the significant adults about the abilities and limitations of a child. Positive and helpful tags improve the performance and self-worth of a child, but negative tags can lead to fear and distress. As adults, we need to know how we can be responsible in creating a fear zone or a growth zone. A clear understanding of our role in developing self-esteem in children, especially those with disabilities, may help them take a leap from self-doubt to self-worth.

Take the reference of 'The Elephant Rope' and

how as parents or educators we bind children with our views and they gradually internalise these as their own; just like the elephant whose leg was tied by ropes. They don't run freely even with no cage, boundaries or chains. Have you ever thought why they don't break free? This is because when they are young, they are tied with these ropes which they cannot break. At that age, these ropes can hold them. However, they get conditioned and believe that they cannot break free from the ropes that bind them even when they grow up. Conditioning is something not unique to animals, even humans get conditioned to stimulus that they receive. Hence, it has significant implications for parents and teachers to tread carefully and be mindful of interactions they have with their children.

Improvement of self - concept

It is important to understand that learning begins early in life. Children learn by seeing, listening

and doing. They learn best in an environment where they feel safe and inspired by stimulating materials around them. During these formative years, they develop their self-concept. A clear understanding of what they can or cannot do is reinforced positively or negatively by significant adults around them. Simple principles can be followed to ensure all children enjoy a positive self-concept and feel as productive members of the class. This will facilitate them to be productive members of the group not only socially but also academically.

What can a teacher do in a class of forty or more to stimulate a positive self-concept? Here are some of the guiding principles for them to follow:

- **Accept the Children as They are**

Children follow the same developmental pattern but each child is unique and understands at a different pace. It is important for a teacher to be cognizant of the fact that children will learn different skills at a different pace and all should not be forced to learn at the same speed. No child should be measured with the same yard stick. This understanding would save the pedagogue from a lot of struggle. If the pedagogue is able to plan a diverse set of activities instead of the same set of skills and tasks, she/he will not only cater to students from diverse backgrounds but also with special needs. Such a class would be welcoming for all.

- **Set Realistic Goals without Pressure of Failure**

The next important thing for an educator is to be aware of the fact that children with or without disabilities have similar needs, the only difference being the intensity. It is also the responsibility of the care-givers to appreciate that children with disabilities have many abilities besides their disabilities. As it is said, if a particular sense organ of a person is not functional, all other senses become over active to enable the person to function smoothly. The caregivers need to intensely work on these strengths of the children, so that they are able to cope with the adverse situations.

Therefore, the focus needs to be shifted from what they cannot do to what they can do, only then the classrooms will become more engaging and students will be more confident with a high self-concept.

Like any other child, children with disabilities are sensitive to adults' inputs and high expectations from them would help them to perform more than their potential. The Pygmalion effect, wherein higher expectations lead to enhanced performance while pressure or belittling remarks lead to failure. Hence, we need to encourage children without being critical.

- **Create Conditions for Learning**

We need to create an enriching environment to help students collaborate and learn from each other. The right mix of assistive devices, worksheets, technology and participation will benefit all students. A teacher needs to be observant and sensitive to the diverse needs of students and plan accordingly in a way that no child feels left behind. All students should get an opportunity to succeed despite variation in the learning capacity. For example, children struggling to write may be given the option of an objective type assessment. This will ensure that they don't perform less than their peers. There will be no stress or shame associated with underperformance. Hence, the focus has to be shifted to learning and participation rather than demonstration of the best work done.

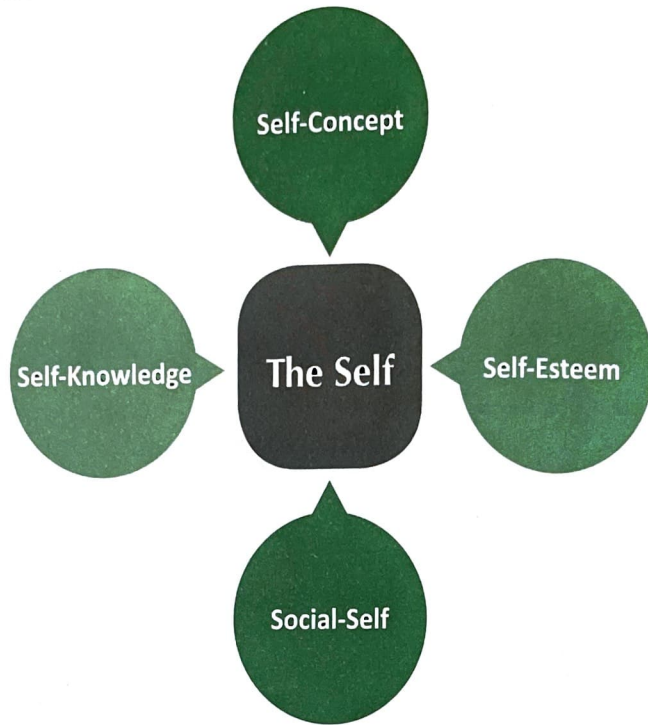
The biggest task is to design the curriculum according to the capability of each child. Their flexibility, multi-sensorial competency and adaptability should be considered to improve the scenario. The early childhood educators need to focus on enhancing the positive experiences in the differently abled children and modify the standard curriculum, teaching strategies and work proficiency.

Teaching 21st Century Skills

Children with disabilities may sometimes have a low self-esteem because of their limitations in being able to achieve levels fixed by society for them. They may feel low, thinking that they are at a dis-advantageous position and life is

full of challenges. In such a situation, talking to them to understand their thoughts would help elevate their self-esteem. The teacher can play a significant role in helping students control their emotions. It is imperative to address the thoughts which make them feel low and not disregard their feelings. The teacher can quote examples of people who could overcome challenges in their lives. This would infuse enthusiasm in them to move ahead.

Hence, growing up is a constant process of rising, falling and learning to rise again. Adults play a significant role in providing an environment where they can explore without comparison, experiment without competitiveness and fail without condemnation. It is only then that they develop their full potential and are not chained by negativity and low self-esteem.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-concept#/media/File:The_constituent_on_one's_self.png

Conclusion

With the new education policy, 'Education for All'- (Sarvashiksha Abhiyan) and 'Inclusive Classrooms', it is essential that the social and intellectual needs of the differently abled are taken care of. The primary focus needs to be on developing their self-respect, which can be achieved not only by empathising with them but by appreciating their beliefs and values.

The classroom strategies have a tremendous influence on the young learners. Research shows that the literacy issues have a wide-spread and life-long impact on a student especially in the impressionable years. The special needs children suffer from low self-esteem as these children are tagged by their environment.

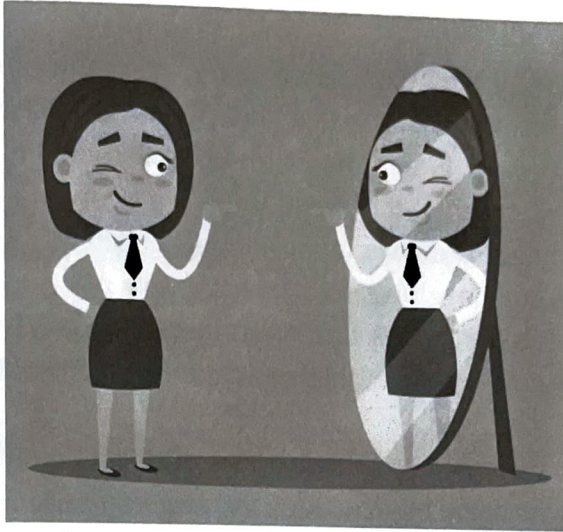
Therefore, it is our moral duty as responsible adults to make sincere efforts to groom them in a comfortable setting and make strategies to enhance their positive self-image. The responsibility lies especially on pre-school facilitators to assimilate the special needs children into the mainstream classrooms. The caregivers of the children need to identify and work on their strengths, encourage their efforts and equip them with skills to meet the challenges of life.

The three R's, i.e., Rejoice, Respect and Revitalize can be inculcated during the early years. Let them rejoice in what they do well, get respect for what they are and revitalize their energy to overcome the challenges. We need

to make them feel special. A little appreciation from the adults will help improve children's resilience and their ability to bounce back from adversity. They need to feel as an integral part of the community. Self-esteem is boosted when

children are allowed to contribute to their world and to the well-being of others. This is one of the most effective ways to improve the self-worth and to convey that they can be of help to others.

The Importance of Positive Self-Talk



The next time you make a mistake, stop and take a moment to hear your inner voice. What is it telling you? Is it saying that your mistake was expected, was one of far too many or was because you're a horrible person? Or was your inner voice reminding you that no one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes and your mistake is an excellent opportunity to learn something and make improvements?

Your inner voice, or self-talk, is a running narration of your daily experiences. It is a combination of conscious thoughts and unconscious beliefs, developed throughout your life in reaction to things people have said to you, ways in which people have related to you and how you felt about yourself in various scenarios.

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/Dy2HBn9hnGGh9rNt6>

Reference:

- http://www.complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-2.1-Planning-to-meet_needs/All/m05p050c.html
- <https://thsc.org/special-needs-curriculum/>

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Self-Concept and Achievement Motivation of Adolescents: A Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Self-Concept and achievement motivation are important aspects of child development. Both these seem to have an impact on the academic performance of adolescents. Around 200 adolescents, aged 14-17 years, were studied to examine their self-concept and achievement motivation. The influence of both these independent variables on the dependent variable - academic performance was studied using a set of standard questionnaires for self-concept and achievement motivation. The sample belonged to the same socio-economic and educational background. No gender differences in adolescent self-concept and achievement motivation were found. The correlation between self-concept and achievement motivation was found to be significant. The effect of self-concept and achievement motivation on academic performance was significant with self-concept having a greater influence on the outcome.

Introduction

Adolescence

The period of adolescence is the stage of life that begins at puberty and carries on to adulthood. An age ranges from about 10-18 years. This stage is characterized by physical and physiological changes, emergence of sexual feelings, construction of identity and the ability to think abstractly. It is a transitional stage generally regarded as a stressful period.

As adolescents transition through this phase, and are developing a sense of self, they are often faced with many decisions that appear to be difficult. Making academic choices, choosing friends, unraveling issues of sexuality, and peer pressures are some of the situations that adolescents may find themselves in. Adolescence as a stage is full of tremendous challenges that require adjustment to the remarkable changes in appearance, the nature, the family dynamics and the peer group.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is an individual's understanding of his/her characteristics, qualities and abilities. It has been put forth as a complex, multilayered pattern of principles, attitudes and /or philosophies held by a person about himself/ herself (Chan, 2002; Woolfolk, 2001). Some theorists state that self-concept initiates the thought of the possible self and it creates the motivation for behavior. It is the way one views him/herself as well as ones thoughts and opinions, feelings and behaviors (Saraswat and Gaur,1981). According to Ahluwalia (1999) self-concept is an extensive area that characterizes the personality and gives direction to life. The importance of self- concept has been reiterated in the academic settings and especially during

the adolescent years and has been the focus of the present paper.

Achievement Motivation and Academic Achievement

Motivation is refers to a process that guides, encourages and drills an individual to carry on in a particular direction. It incites, focuses and supports behavior. Learning and maturation are very strongly connected with each other. According to Abraham Maslow, only once the primary needs are fulfilled, can the individual concentrate on the higher needs in the pyramid like intellectual achievement. Motivating students to learn is an issue that always requires attention. Motivating students towards success is a challenge as well. Motivation is greatly appreciated; it produces significant responses according to Deci and Ryan (2000). The attitude is used in collaboration with motivation with a direction towards achieving self-concept, or the way one thinks of the self as performing a task successfully. Academic achievement gets enhanced if the self-concept is positive as it enhances the motivation to achieve.

When a student strives towards the achievement of academic success, it can be associated with achievement motivation (Amalaha, 1975; Moen and Doyle, 1977). According to Slavin (2006), motivation constantly pushes us to keep performing, and helps in determining the direction for the future. Research study by Blank (1997) has stated that students having a high achievement motivation had a higher probability for academic achievement. Achievement motivation has been pointed as self-determination to succeed in academic work (Gesinde, 2000). Several other studies (Kushman et al. 2000; Broussard and Garrison, 2004; Skaalvik, S. Skaalvik, 2004) have also reported a positive correlation between factors namely motivation and academic accomplishment. Other

factors such as gender, social class or ethnicity have also been identified that have an influence on self-concept in adolescents. If we understand this in context of educational set up, academic achievement is often put forth as the most important goal of education. Parental education and/or occupation and home environment often play a significant role in this (Bala, 2011, Muola, 2010).

Academic Self-Concept

Self-concept has been defined as a person's perception about his/herself. It has been referred to as the confidence a person has about him/herself in being able to accomplish a given task. According to Chowdhary and Pati (1997) in elementary years of upbringing whenever the caregiver accepts and approves the child's performance, it encourages in the child respect for one self and instills in him/her confidence to do a particular task. A review of literature (Abouserie, 1995; Tella 2007; Chowdhury & Pati, 1997) shows a moderate to high relation of self-concept to academic performance.

Research by Tella (2007) on academic achievement and learning outcomes in mathematics among secondary school students pointed that students with higher motivation performed better academically than students with lesser motivation. It was highlighted that how a student approaches to study often can be related to the personality traits and achievement motivation specifically.

Based on this literature review, the present study focuses on studying the relationship between the self-concept and achievement motivation and relate it to their academic achievement. The data was collected from around 200 adolescents in the age group of 14-17. The parents of the adolescents had a similar socio-economic background and the educational status and levels were similar too and were residing in urban areas.

The tools used in the study for assessing achievement motivation were "Achievement Motivation Scale by Deo-Mohan (1985) which contained 50 items to assess academic, general field and social interests.

Self-Concept Questionnaire by Rajkumar Saraswat (1981) was used. It covered six dimensions of self-concept, namely physical, social, moral, temperamental, educational and intellectual. The tool has operationally defined these as:

- Physical: The persons view of their physical self, physical appearance etc.
- Social: Individual's perception of self-worth in social interactions
- Temperamental: Individuals' prevailing emotional state or a particular kind of emotional reaction
- Educational: Individual's understanding of the self in relation to school, teachers and other school related activities.
- Moral: Individuals' assessment of their morality; right and wrong actions.
- Intellectual: Individuals' cognizance of their capacity to solve problems etc.

The inventory contained 48 items; eight across each dimension.

The academic performance was assessed by marks obtained by each student who was part of the sample in the final examination of their respective classes.

Results

The independent variables, self-concept and achievement motivation, were studied to find out their effect on and relationship with the dependent variable, academic performance. 86 boys and 86 girls, a total of 172 adolescents between the age group of 14-17 were studied.

It was found that there were no differences in gender with regards to self-concept except across the physical factor. No gender differences emerged when achievement motivation was viewed.

From the study, it emerged that there are various factors that have an influence on total self-concept. From the analysis, it emerged, that the temperamental factor has the maximum influence on the total self-concept of the adolescents but factors like educational and moral also have an influence on the self-concept.

Table 1: Percentage of each of the factors on self-concept

Physical	11%
Social	9%
Temperamental	49%
Educational	25%
Moral	11%
Intellectual	2%

There was a significant relationship between self-concept and achievement motivation of the students. Other correlational studies between achievement and self-concept have also identified that they do have an influence over each other. Most similar studies (Lawrence, A. & Vimala, A., 2013; Chetri, S., 2014; Nwankwo et al., 2013) reported a relationship between these two variables. Study by Marsh (1992) showed that change in self-concept was associated with change in academic achievement.

It was also found that the independent variables, self-concept and achievement motivation, had a very strong influence on the dependent variable, academic performance. This impact aligned with expectations as well. That is, there was a significant correlation between self-concept and achievement motivation and academic performance. Of the two, self-concept had a greater effect on academic achievement.

Through several studies, Boggiano (1992) revealed that achievement motivation positively influenced academic performance. A study by Abouserie (2006) advocates that students' self-esteem and achievement motivation have a substantial impact on their attitudes and the methods they use to study and learn. Academic achievement and its relationship with achievement motivation and self-concept were also examined (Awan, Naz and Noureen, 2011). The results presented the fact that achievement motivation and self-concept are significantly related to academic achievement.

Conclusion

The period of adolescence is viewed as having numerous developmental issues and concerns. These issues are constantly a concern for parents. One of the concerns the adolescents have has to do with academic performance. The motivational levels of the student also have an influence on this.

One can appreciate the relevance of the study as it becomes evident for the parents and teachers to understand the adolescents better at a very important phase of their life, when they are preparing for their careers. Knowing the passions of the students and their interests would help in guiding the adolescents in achieving their goals.

The findings of the study indicate that the self-concept, achievement motivation and academic performance of an adolescent are closely related. A clear relationship emerged between the two independent variables – self-concept and achievement motivation and the dependent variable of academic performance.

The present study provides an understanding of the course of action that can be used to guide adolescents through their difficulties. It provides parents and teachers with a tool to adequately assess the capability of the adolescents and view the positive and negative traits which may be supporting or hindering their progress academically.

The study proves that self-concept and achievement motivation have a highly significant impact on academic performance. This could be used to predict the performance of students.

More importantly, the recommendations that would emerge from the study would guide parents in understanding their adolescent better. If both the variables of self-concept and achievement motivation were assessed and evaluated at intervals, it would help parents and teachers in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the adolescent over the period of time and the right kind of guidance could be provided to the adolescent to be able to achieve academic success which is an inherent desire of all students.

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ARNEC CONNECTIONS

Working Together for Early Childhood

No. 8, 2014



THEME:
ECD on the global agenda:
Building partnerships for sustainability
and harmony



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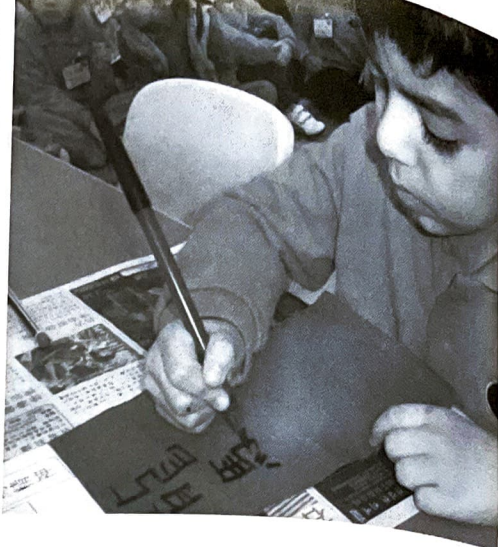
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When is the right time for inclusion: Experiences from inclusive schools of Delhi

By Reema Lamba, Associate Professor, University of Delhi, India

Introduction

The rights and entitlements of children have received increased attention in the recent years, in the Western as well as Indian contexts. The old system of conceptualizing and categorizing children in terms of medical, diagnostic model has been challenged as the social and educational models unfolded. The emphasis shifted from assessment and factors within the child to educational contexts in which the child was situated. The concerns have no longer been whether to provide inclusive education, but how to implement in ways that are both feasible and effective. Structure of the schools as organizations has therefore become the focal point to understand inclusion or exclusion within the system, than differences between individual pupils that create special educational needs. In working towards the promotion of inclusive schools, one of the important steps hence emerged was, identification of barriers to learning and participation currently being experienced by students in the schools and has been the focus of the present study.

The study

A study of inclusive set up was envisaged to provide insights into the interactional patterns among the children with special needs and their peers. Capturing the voices of the students, their experiences and concerns seemed to be beneficial to understand the different constraints in the Indian context. The objectives were therefore:

To explore the interaction patterns among children with special needs and peers in an inclusive classroom.

To gain insights into the factors that influence these interaction patterns.

Method

The different integrated and inclusive schools of Delhi were identified and surveyed. A classification and categorization of these schools was done based on the different services being provided. Three schools with inclusive orientation were purposively selected for the in-depth study. There were two regular schools that had opened doors for children with disabilities and one special-integrated school for children with a

specific disability that began experimenting inclusion for students with other types of disabilities in their system. The schools varied in terms of funding and management as one was a trust based school, the other a private school and the third a government school. The only common thread among all the three schools was that they had opened doors to children with a special need. In all the three schools, children with disability were part of the curricular and co-curricular activities throughout the day.

The schools, however, varied as mentioned earlier in terms of their funding and management besides the type of adaptations and provisions made for the children. To summarize, the three schools were experimenting inclusion in their own set ups, in their own ways. The age group of children focused was elementary years as researches had pointed these years as an important period in the development of self-concept and social competitiveness. Hence for the present research classes from I to IV in the junior school were focused. The number and nature of special needs of the students in the selected inclusive classes are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Nature of special needs of children in classes observed (N=63+12*)

School	Sex	Nature of Special Needs								TOTAL	
		Loco-motor	Specific - Learning	Multiple	Intellectual	Visual	Hearing	Behavioural	Speech		
I	M	27	-	2	1+1*	1	1	2*	-	32+3*	44+3*
	F	11	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	12	
II	M	2+1*	1+1*	1	2*	1	-	1+2*	-	6+6*	10+7*
	F	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	1*	4+1*	
III	M	2	1*	1	-	2	1	1*	-	6+2*	9+2*
	F	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	

Note: * Refers to children who were identified by class teachers as needing special attention but not mentioned in school records as 'children with a special need'.

The interactions among the students with special needs and peers gave insights into friendship patterns and class grouping in an inclusive set up. The sample of peers included a combination of student aide to children with disability or those who were not actively interacting with the child to get a comprehensive view, which has been summed in Table 2.

Development and description of tools

The schools, once identified for detailed study, were visited frequently to form rapport with the staff and children, while developing and finalizing the tools for data collection. Qualitative tools were preferred over more structured and standardized measures. The experiences of children with a special need were drawn upon from the **observations** in the inclusive classes and **semi-structured theme oriented discussions** of children and their peers identified from the different schools during the study.

Results and discussion

Profile of the students with special needs

The children with a special need in a number of the classes (ten) were older than their peers. A closer probe of these classes revealed that children with a special need who had been a part of the regular class from the beginning were the same age as peers. On the other hand, children with a special need placed through the special institute or from a special or non-formal section within the school were older than peers. The type and severity of special needs of the students varied within and across the schools. In School III, the special needs were largely sensory-motor while in School I, there was a pre-dominance of loco-motor disabilities besides other cases from special sections. The students in School II had mild-moderate learning needs, sensory-motor or multiple special needs (also refer Table 1).

Friendship patterns among peers and children with special needs in an inclusive classroom

Observations on 'peer relations shared in the classes' have been analyzed as **spontaneous** natural behaviour without adult intervention and **structured relations** where adults maneuver student behaviour. The peers were observed to be taking different roles as 'mothering', 'over-protecting the student', 'teaching' or 'appreciating the student for his / her

Table 2: Distribution of peers in the sample (N=70)

School	Sex	Age group (in years)				TOTAL	
		6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10		
I	M	-	3	7	4	14	24
	F	-	1	5	4	10	
II	M	3	2	3	3	11	25
	F	5	6	2	1	14	
III	M	1	-	4	7	12	21
	F	4	-	-	5	9	

skills'. Sometimes a few peers were also observed to 'tease' or 'provoke clownish behaviour'. 'Playing on an equal level' was also observed, though less frequently. Sometimes the children with a special need were observed to outsmart their peers and in a few cases were also left out from the group.

Theme based conversations revealed that peers discussed more in terms of physical appearance or class behaviour than disability. In most cases where peers had been together since early years, they talked more about special talents of children with disabilities than their limitations. Awareness and usage of such medical labels in the children's repertoire of words as "*rollator, braces, braille book, numero board, O.T class*" was quite uncommon to be seen in the children of their age. This enhancement of knowledge in the area of disability while being sensitive to the skills and limitations of the students can be viewed as fringe effects/ benefits of inclusion.

Insights from the students

Students' views on various aspects related to school, teachers, peers or self have been collated below. Most of the children in all the schools praised the system and expressed happiness in attending the programme. The students interactions with the teachers were also observed to vary across schools. The students in School I and III were mostly observed to sit passively and do work, as instructed with little or no interaction in the class. While in School II most of the time the students were observed to be overfriendly with the teacher trying to seek her attention, interrupting her lecture a number of times.

Interactions with peers seemed to depend on the nature of special needs, years of togetherness and mediation of adults

around. Conversation with children also supported these observations. There was variation of response between the children in regular class and those from special sections to regular class. A careful analysis revealed that students that had been in the regular class spoke more positively about their peers than the students who had been placed in the regular class from the special section on an experimental basis. The children placed from the special sections in School I did not report a sense of belonging. Instead they shared how they were left out. Children with intellectual challenge reported that peers in the regular sections teased students from the special sections as 'immature and less capable than themselves', as '*bachcha*' (a child) or '*budhu*' (a simpleton). These children sat in an inclusive class for studying but had lunch in the special section with those friends or stood in the corridors and moved around with them only. However, children with sensory disabilities as hearing impairment or visual impairment although reported as having many friends in class.

A discussion on **help received from peers** or **help given to peers** also got numerous responses. The students with disability reported peers' assistance in mobility, copying down of homework, getting mid-day meal from the canteen and correction of mistakes in School I. The student with special needs as visual impairment reported helping peers with correction in Mathematics or English homework. When asked to elaborate, it was stated that the peers read aloud their work and the student would point at mistakes in between. Children with the special needs in School III, on the other hand, reported helping peers more often than seeking their help. One student with visual impairment commented, "*I am the gate pass of my friends.*" The explanation was that the teacher did not allow non-

disabled students to go out during the class, but would send one as an aide for a student with disability if requested so. The students reported offering similar advantage to peers during morning prayers or even at the time of school dispersal on the pretext of lifting the student's bag. At School II, peers were reported to be helpful and caring by most students. The help was described as assistance in copying homework, playing games with them and even calling them up when they are unwell.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the behaviour and response patterns of the children with a special need in a few cases changed over the span of the study. This was largely based on their experiences of inclusion or exclusion within their individual school systems. The different factors that seemed to be influencing student participation and self concept that can be concluded from above have been enumerated below.

Timings of inclusion: Beginning inclusion early in school life leads to more natural and spontaneous relation with peers. The peers not only did accept the child but also assisted the teacher in guiding what worked best for the student.

Number of years in the school: The extended period of contact/number of years in a system could be considered as one of the factors in child's response patterns and the responses the student elicited from the people around. A long time span in the school seemed to have a positive influence on both student behaviour and interactions with peers.

Nature of special need: The students' special needs and personality characteristics also emerged as important factors in their acceptance and participation in the system. In a number of cases in each of the three schools it emerged that students' motivation and enthusiasm to participate lead to their active engagement and academic progress in the system.





Mediation of the school, teachers or peers: Students' participation and views towards self seemed to be mediated by the initiatives for involvement undertaken by individuals around them. The students who were praised by their teachers and peers or were delegated roles in class had better involvement and self-concept.



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-  ICT: Application and successful implementation in the Early Years
-  Dyslexia: Is ICT a solution?
-  Video Games: Good and bad effects in the Early Years
-  Computers: A Boon or a Curse

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in the Early Years

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NAVTIKA

Vol. II, No. 2 May-July 2011

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Potential Role of Computer Aided Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

Dr. Reema Lamba

Abstract

You would agree that classrooms are increasingly becoming heterogeneous, where children from different socio-political background and needs come together to study. The role of the pedagogue therefore, is becoming very challenging as she tries to complete the curriculum content while meeting the individual needs and learning styles of her students. The use of computer assisted learning can ease some of these pressures on the pedagogue. The learning would continue in a group setting with the teacher as a facilitator or guide while the students work on their computers. This article is an attempt to put a case forward on the use of information and communication technology in inclusive classes. The article is based on information from researches and field experiences including assistive technology for children with disabilities. An attempt has been made to demystify the use of computers in class and highlight best practices while discussing the myths and facts at the other end. The article should facilitate a better understanding on the role of computers in the teaching learning process.

Introduction

The classrooms today are including a diverse population of students in keeping with policies and act on 'education for all'. There are students from elite class, economically backward class, different medium of

instructions and abilities or disabilities-all under one roof. Now the role of a pedagogue becomes quite challenging as he-she tries to meet the educational needs and learning styles of their diverse student population. In fact, to put it forth rightly, she cannot rely on her traditional methods of teaching to meet the

unique needs of individual learners. In such a situation, use of information and communication tools as radio, television and especially computer can support her efforts in classroom transactions. It would not be an exaggeration to say that computers can facilitate a teacher to tailor-made instructions according to the unique needs of individual learners. This statement is true for all students and especially relevant for children with disabilities. Now, let us understand in detail how can it help.

How can ICT help a teacher in an Inclusive Class?

Let us understand some of the ways in which the computers can make our class more child centered and how computers can help to compensate for the disabilities or limitations of a few students.


- **Presentation of Information:** A properly programmed computer has the potential of presenting material clearly with a colourful, animated graphic. This helps in focusing attention. There is also an added advantage of replaying any sequence immediately and even in slow motion. This not only helps to improve perception of information but also aids in building a child's memory. Currently, there are several softwares that enable a student with visual impairment to listen to the file content. Computer programmes are also in place that can help to translate braille

to regular print, thus teachers can easily read and evaluate a student writing in braille.

- **Drill and Practice:** This feature is especially important for students with learning difficulties who need opportunities to practice and learn basic concepts. Computers are very effective in providing opportunities for primarily 'student controlled' drill and practice. Student controlled has been emphasized to highlight that the student can choose when to continue, terminate or switch over to some other exercise. In fact, in the coming years, there may develop intelligent computer assisted instruction based on elements of artificial intelligence.



All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small!



These 'intelligent tutorials' would assume the role of a human tutor in making inferences about the reasons for students' failure. They would be adept at keeping a record of the same and would be able to plan tutorials based on the individual student needs.

- **Immediate Feedback:** In a traditional class, the students have to wait for their work to be corrected and returned by the teacher. Computers, on the other hand provide immediate feedback. In fact various feedback systems can be put in place depending upon the choice of programmes. Let us understand this with an example. One feedback style is simple, the computer indicates whether the response is correct or incorrect, gives the correct answer and the student can go to the next question. Another form is more complex, the computer gives a deeper understanding of the subject pertaining to student needs. Hence, the student learns the 'how' and 'why' of the phenomenon.
- **Learning enhanced through special computer based simulation:** Computer simulation means use of computers to represent real world phenomenon or experiments which cannot be done in a classroom because they are too expensive, time consuming or impractical. Students learn better through these simulations as they can visualize something abstract and find it more interesting than memorizing text book facts. Some of the science simulation programmes from elementary to adult levels are 'Learn

about the Human Body' and 'Learn about Dinosaurs'. 'Body Works' is a science simulation programme which makes the students feel that they are actually travelling in a human body. 'The Math Shop Series' by Scholastic offers challenges to students about mathematical problems in everyday settings of the real world.

- **Learning by play-way method:** Computer based instructional games facilitate learning and skill acquisition through games. For example - the 'word games' enhance language development. 'Quiz games' and 'logic games' promote cognitive development while the 'combat games' and 'psychomotor games' combine intellectual and motor skills besides encouraging the motivation to win.


There has been research support showing that children with learning difficulties and hearing impairment learn better and faster through computers (Bahr and Rieth, 1989; Bialo and Sivin, 1990; Taylor, 1980). The researches also pointed that students spent higher time on task when working on computers than on a paper. Students reported that they could experiment and do trial and error on computers without feeling embarrassed making mistakes. Now, we come to an important concern that are we trying to say that teachers can be replaced by the computers? Let us understand some of the speculations and valid arguments on computer usage in the next section.

Some of the Myths and Facts on Computers

Myths	Facts
<p>Teachers' role is replaced by technology. Use of computers will lead to mechanization and dehumanization of educational process.</p>	<p>In fact the teacher's role in the learning process becomes even more critical as a facilitator or guide. Teachers become co-learners and discover new things along with their students. The teacher would be free from mental jobs and can spend time to improve the quality of teaching inputs.</p>
<p>Information becomes one sided. Students' become passive learners.</p>	<p>Students are active learners and can decide what to learn, how to learn and how much to learn.</p>
<p>Student would have a casual attitude towards school and there would be no discipline.</p>	<p>Computers if used effectively would ensure individualized instructions and hence more structured and disciplined class. Students would get correct and immediate feedback without criticism.</p>
<p>Needs special training to be able to use it.</p>	<p>Computer based educational software if selected appropriately is easy to use for both teachers and students.</p>
<p>Learning would be convergent and non creative.</p>	<p>Computers open a whole world of information for learners to select from and stimulate discovery learning. Interactive features facilitate high order thinking skills as per individual needs.</p>
<p>Very expensive to be used extensively.</p>	<p>Computers are cost effective tools for one to one tutoring.</p>

Hence, as has been explained above, computer has emerged as an effective means of communication. One has to work on

modalities as to how to put them to use effectively. Some of the aspects a teacher can control for in facilitating the use of



this Information and Communication Technology.

- The first and foremost point is the **selection of the educational software**. Some of the important considerations while selecting the computer software in class are as follows:

- The courseware content should be able to meet the educational objectives.
- Material should be user friendly with simple instructions, so that the user can operate upon the computer without prior training.
- The display of information in terms of text size, quality and colour should be used to enhance important information and does not create problem for students with visual impairment.
- There should be liberal use of prompts to ensure minimum confusion among students.
- In problem solving situations, explanations should be accessible step by step.
- An attempt should be made to have a software where medium of instructions

With students from elite class, economically backward class, different medium of instructions and abilities or disabilities-all under one roof, the role of a pedagogue becomes quite challenging as she tries to meet the educational needs and learning styles of her diverse student population.

It is for us to use computers wisely or leave it behind based on irrational fears.

are in the mother tongue.

- **Supervision of Computer Usage:** The teachers should closely monitor the student usage of computers. They should decide in advance what programmes are relevant for the students and supervise student progress on these. They can give instructions to the whole class and plan remedial instructions for a few children with special needs on the computers.
- **Organizing and Planning Learning Experiences:** The teacher should plan her schedule to ensure all the students benefit from the computer aided learning. One of the ways to do so is by rewarding the children some computer time, if they finish their class work. Another child with learning difficulty is assigned computer for drill and practice of a task. Hence, to conclude we can say that computers are here to facilitate teaching-learning in terms of quality of information, communication and evaluation. It is for us to use it wisely or leave it behind based on irrational fears.



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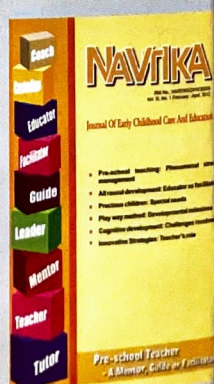
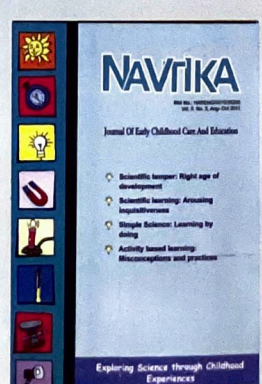
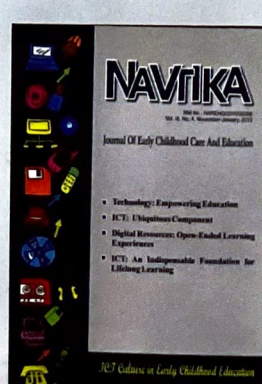
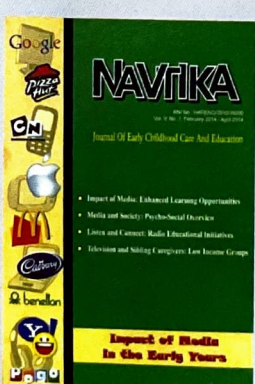
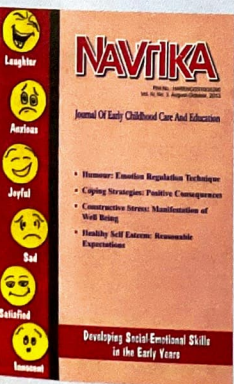
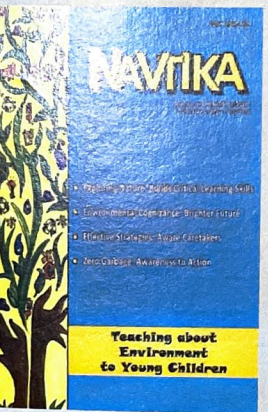
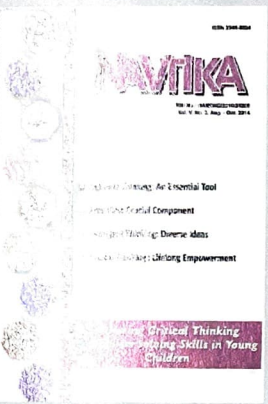
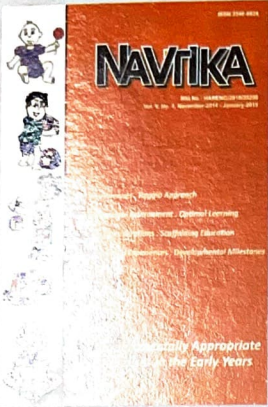
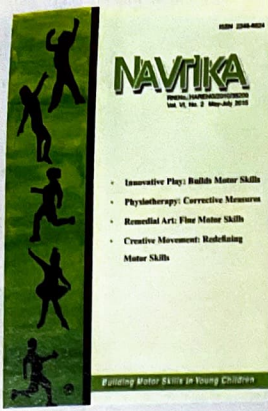
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Reach out to the special call !

- Learning Disability : Decoded
- Inclusive Education: Right of every child
- Art Therapy: Expressive Education
- Special Children: Boundless Potential

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NAVTIKA

JOURNAL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Navtika is a Journal that serves as a practical guide for teachers, parents and other caregivers who manage children between 0 to 6 years. It seeks to inform, deepen knowledge and address parental concerns, empowering them to deliver better care. The journal publishes original work based on standards of excellence and expert views. The articles are interesting insights into various aspects of children's well being.

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FROM THE

EDITOR'S DESK

New Year is not about changing dates, but direction. It is not about changing actions but Attitude. For us 2016 is about changing force and focus. Since 2007, we have proudly brought out India's only journal on Early Childhood Care and Education. It has grown and become popular amongst caregivers in these years. After 9 successful years Navtika is going in for redesigning. We hope the readers like the change. We begin with this issue – **Reach out to the special call** which is an initiative to sensitize people towards needs of special children. The issue describes the special needs of special children, so that the caregivers become adept at handling and helping them.

Dr. Indu Khetarpal

Principal

Salwan Public School

Rajendra Nagar

New Delhi

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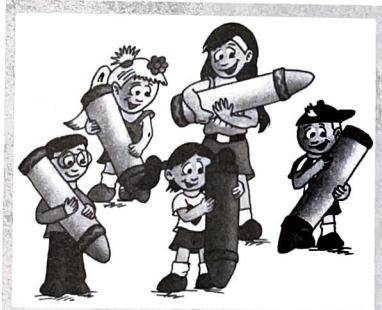
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Inclusive Education To Be or Not to Be



Dr. Reema Lamba

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education as a concept is gaining ground all around the world. It began as an addition to a jargon of terms such as segregation, mainstreaming or integration with regards to the education of children with disabilities; however, it is now used in a broader sense focusing on all vulnerable groups of children. It is therefore important to be clear what the term means and how it differs from the others. This paper gives an overview of the concept of inclusive education, the need and various factors underpinning the change. It is often our misunderstanding about the concept of inclusion that creates fears and more frequently exclusion within the system. Such failures often make us question whether we should be inclusive or not. An attempt has therefore been made to help understand exclusionary factors within the classroom/school and suggest how to create conditions for learning.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Researchers have varied in their rationale for promoting segregation or inclusion; one which does not allow any interaction between children with special needs and the normal children, and the other that offers full interactional support may it be physical, socio - emotional or functional. The fulcrum, however, has pointed in favour of inclusion on the fundamental grounds namely; social-ethical wherein it is believed as the stepping stone for creating an inclusive society and removing discrimination. Understanding it from the **legal perspective**, India is committed towards the education for all in an appropriate environment. **Persons with Disabilities Act (1995), National Curriculum Framework (2005), Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) and National ECCE Policy (2012)** are a few commitments focusing on inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools. Analysing the situation in economic context, in India it is more of a necessity, in keeping with the large numbers of children in our country whose needs are to be addressed and limited resources

available. It is often misunderstandings related to our implementation of the term inclusion which creates fear and often exclusion within the system. Let us try and understand inclusion to be able to create better learning environments.

Inclusion can be stated as a move towards removing barriers in bringing all children together in the school. It is an outcome of changing perspectives towards childhood and the education for all the vulnerable groups of children. Vulnerable children includes all children with special needs visible to us (such as physical disabilities, sensory and communication disorders) and children with special needs not so visible to us (such as child labourer, girl child, learning disabilities, ethnic and social disadvantage). An understanding that these children need supports to develop their potentials and opportunities to learn instead of sympathy has laid the foundation of the concept of inclusive education.

Inclusion refers to restructuring educational provisions to promote "belonging". It is a value system, which holds that all students are entitled

to equitable access to learning, achievements and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education.

It is about restructuring schools as community where all children can learn together rather than isolating the child with special needs or trying to fit him/her in a regular school not designed for them. It is based on the belief that greater contact between children will break the barriers of misunderstanding and dispel the myths created in response to diverse abilities. The focus is on providing services to students in regular classroom rather than pulling students out of regular class to receive specialized services. Inclusion can therefore be understood as a process of removal of barriers and creation of opportunities for all children instead of removing the children themselves. If true inclusion has to happen then it is important for us to be aware of its need and relevance.

Several studies have documented that efforts to include students with diverse abilities in general education classroom results in positive experiences and improved attitudes for both students with and without disabilities and teachers alike. Baker et al (1995) in his study on the comparison of effects of inclusive versus non-inclusive educational practices for special education students demonstrated a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on the academic and social outcomes of special needs children. It further revealed that instructional time was not lost by non-disabled students when disabled students were included in their classroom. Additionally, non-disabled peers did not pick up undesirable behaviour from their disabled peers. The positive outcomes identified have been a reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness, growth in social cognition, improvement in self-concept and development of warm and caring friendships. Thus, the philosophy of inclusion is gaining strength in the international scenario and review of research abroad has pointed at positive experiences for both non-disabled and disabled students, helping to build a basis for community and friendship.

In India, although ideology of inclusion has always been believed in, total inclusion in practice seems to be a distant dream due to barriers in

its implementation. Some of the barriers are as follows.

Barriers in implementation of Inclusion

Inclusion and exclusion can be stated as two sides of the same coin. Awareness and sincere attempts to minimize exclusion helps in fostering an inclusive environment. Some of the barriers that have been identified based on experience of inclusion have been

- **Lack of awareness:** There are myths and misconceptions about inclusion and special needs of students. An important step towards inclusion would therefore be developing an understanding that it is the attitude and environment that needs to be changed than the individual with diverse abilities.
- **Absence of barrier free environment:** The schools are not accessible, reachable and workable based on the Universal Design of Barrier Free Environment.
- **Lack of teacher preparation and support system:** Teachers willingness to include a child with special needs is often overlooked in the top-down approach. The teachers tend to continue teaching in traditional ways not effective for children with diverse needs. A high student-teacher ratio and absence of a trained help to teachers in class are also some of the barriers to inclusive pedagogies.
- **Scarcity of teaching-learning materials:** There is dearth of assistive devices and adaptive devices such as visual magnifiers, Braille, talking books etc. for children with disabilities which add to the load of the teacher.
- **Resistance by parents:** Parents lack awareness of facilities in the school and in the absence of knowledge and support,⁹ sometimes resist any changes in the system.

The practice of exclusion of students with disabilities can be reversed; all we need is a supportive and understanding environment.

The next section discusses some of the key elements for a successful practice.

Key elements in Inclusion

The first step to successful inclusion is an understanding and appreciation of varied

dimensions of human diversity. Some of the helpful strategies to enhance inclusion in schools have been identified as

- **All children are welcome:** There is a commitment by all the school personnel to include all. The staff must be willing to learn, experiment and struggle against all odds.
- **Whole school approach:** The institutional head should play a more instrumental role in synergizing both material and human resource. The efforts should be directed towards not only capacity building but also forming a collaborative school culture.
- **Focus on children's strengths:** An attempt should be to accommodate diverse learning styles capitalizing on individual abilities than focusing on limitations.
- **Decrease competitive, norm-referenced environments:** Design instructional environment for multi-level learning and self paced learning than norm referenced criterion.
- **Use of peers as a source of support:** Encourage child to child learning, peer tutoring and buddy system to promote respect and true understanding towards each other.
- **Use cooperative learning and group work:** Provide support and scaffolding so that the child can push ahead to the next level of learning.
- **Provide for active and experiential learning:** Use of simulations, projects, role plays should be encouraged. Students should be given choices and the focus should be on their interests.
- **Use positive reinforcement and praise:** Provide constructive and consistent feedback. Students should have an opportunity to discuss concerns with teachers and counselors. Issues of motivation, self-perception and self-efficacy should be addressed in a conducive environment.
- **Involve parents as partners in the educational process:** Welcome the parents as part of the school family and seek their inputs for the education of their ward.
- **Review exclusionary factors in the system:** True inclusion is a conscious effort to identify and reduce exclusionary practices. Only then can the classrooms become more nurturing and welcoming for all.

Hence, the key question is not whether to be inclusive or not but to understand that inclusion is a journey; everyday struggles to fight exclusion and not an end in itself. Creating inclusive classrooms and schools is definitely challenging but not unattainable.

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