Challenges And Benefits of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs

Dr. Vinay Kumar Sharma, Department of Education, Murli Singh Yadav Memorial Prashikshan Sansthan, Udairamsar Bikaner, Rajasthan 334402

Abstract

Inclusion has become a global trend in special education over the past decade. The governments of various countries have responded to this trend by implementing progressive policies that promote inclusive education. This paper examines inclusive education for children with disabilities. It differentiated inclusive education from mainstreaming and integration and gave a comprehensive meaning to the term inclusive education. There was a discussion on a few of the critical challenges faced during the implementation of inclusive education, followed by a discussion on effective policies for achieving an achieving educational system. We concluded that inclusive education is essential.

Keywords: inclusive education, examines, disabilities

Introduction

Historically, many, if not all, countries around the world have discriminated against people with disabilities and special needs. People with disabilities have typically been subjected to different forms of segregated education if they have been given access to education due to their respective impairments of mental or behavioural characteristics. UNESCO (1994) was the first organization to express its commitment to inclusive education through its Salamanca Declaration 1994. In response to the Salamanca Statement, many countries embraced inclusive education as a new approach to providing education for children with special needs. For example, although Botswana enacted its first educational policy in 1977, special educational provisions were not explicitly included until 1994 (Chhabra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010) [8]. Special education programs should, to the extent possible, be designed to integrate children into mainstream schools to prepare them for social integration. Parents and community members are encouraged to participate in the planning and delivering of children's education based on their specific unique needs. Governments are encouraged to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities by providing infrastructure and other facilities that enhance learning, socialization, and overall development (Chika, 2011; Jacob & Olisaemeka, 2016), There is evidence that children with special needs who attend school with their peers typically do well academically and socially. A growing body of research indicates that including students with disabilities in general education may allow them to learn in natural, stimulating environments. Which may also result in an increased appreciation for differences (Ajuwon, 2008; Jacob & Olisaemeka, 2016). Several authorities and individuals define inclusion differently, which can create confusion about its strengths and weaknesses and how to best implement it. According to the United Nations Girls Education Initiative UNGEI (2017), inclusive education refers to a system that considers different categories of students and addresses their varying needs through increased participation in learning, culture, and communities, thus reducing exclusion from education Scherman, Zimmerman, Howie, and Bosker (2014) add that to achieve this, the curriculum needs to be adapted with significant changes to content, methods, and structures

Concept of Inclusive Education

Experts define educating students with disabilities in general education as inclusive education. In a school environment, each child is considered equally valuable (Chika, 2011) (9). Therefore, children with disabilities benefit from being exposed to children with diverse personalities, talents, and characteristics.

The inclusive education model was born from the realization that all children deserve an education free of discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, or abilities (Hayes & Bulat, 2017) (13). Inclusive education permits students with special educational needs to spend most of their school day with students who do not have special needs. Rather than segregating students of all abilities into general education classrooms and schools, the goal should be to provide all students with the exceptional support and services they need to participate effectively in the classroom, such as assistive

devices, teacher assistants, and an adapted curriculum (Hayes & Bulat, 2017) (13). Despite this, some advocates, and parents of students with special needs have criticized the practice because some children require entirely different learning methods than those commonly used in the classroom. Some critics claim that it is impossible to effectively deliver two or more very different instructional methods in the same classroom.

Inclusive education refers to admitting students of all abilities to age-appropriate general education classes at the school of their choice as part of the core curriculum (Bui et al., 2010; Alquraini & Gut, 2012) (2,6). Providing specialized intensive instruction in alternative environments. Such as pulling a child out of a general education classroom for intensive literacy or language instruction may also be helpful for some students in some areas of study (Jacob, & Olisaemeka, 2019) (16). It is essential to ensure that removing a student from the classroom does not become the default practice. This practice should be limited to students who cannot benefit from intensive, specialized instruction in a general education course.

Students with disabilities are assumed to be equally competent in the classroom and at school as students without disabilities. This way, all students can participate actively in their classrooms and in the local school community. Many of the concerns of this movement are related to legislation that requires students to attend school in the least restrictive environment (LRE). In other words, they are with other students who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent possible, with general education being the first option for all students (Alquraini & Gut, 2012) (2). Consequently, students who use different instructional methods often lag their peers in their educational progress. Students are not required to spend all their time with their peers inclusive education.

Critical challenges Faced by Inclusive Education

According to Garuba (2003) (12), Negeria and most African countries are still grappling with the issue of providing care for children with special needs despite mainstreaming. This scenario is not unthinkable because inclusive education requires many human and material resources. According to Mathew and Jha (2015) (19) some of the challenges facing inclusive education are-

- Lack of access to the mainstream: only 4 to 5% of children with special needs out of 30 Million have access to education. Unfortunately, so many schools do not cater to the needs of these children. Several factors contribute to the failure of inclusive education, including a lack of awareness, a lack of positive attitudes, and a lack of sensitivity on the part of teachers, classmates, parents, and community members. Consequently, these children face discrimination.
- Lack of trained teachers: Teachers are not trained and unwilling to modify their teaching methods to accommodate children with special needs and other children.
- Large class size : Typically, there are 60 to 70 students in a class, which makes it difficult to provide individual attention to students, and even more difficult for teachers who are dealing with children who are special needs.
- Lack of child-centred and relevant Curriculum: The curriculum is rigid and does not offer many choices to the children. Moreover, the teaching-learning materials are inappropriate for children with and without special needs.

Parents, special education teachers, and other relevant stakeholders have been arguing about whether inclusive education can be achieved, according toSamkange (2013). From Samkange's perspective, the point of contention revolves around the interpretation of inclusion. A few stakeholders are confused by this provision because it requires learners with disabilities and other special needs to attend mainstream classes regardless of their impairments, abilities, or age. Starczewska, Hodkinson, and Adams (2012) (25) support a similar interpretation of inclusive education by arguing that it offers a chance for diverse learners, such as students with disabilities, to participate, and it calls for revisiting pertinent cultural policies and practices. Louw and Wium (2015) (15) support this view and point out that many marginalized learners worldwide do not have the chance to attend school.

Inclusive Policies

Motitswe (2012) (21) argues that inclusive policies are essential to achieving inclusive

education. In Motitswe's view, a robust and inclusive policy can help prevent exploitation, human rights violations, unfair discrimination, and the denial of quality education to learners with disabilities. According to Stainback, Stainback, and Jackson (1992) (26), historical reasons may have made inclusive education impossible. It was always more preoccupied with the specific impairments of learners with disabilities and those with other special needs rather than what they could achieve as individuals.

An effective inclusion policy, Motitswe further argues, helps generate a conducive work environment that can accommodate all categories of people, including individuals with disabilities and other special needs. Naidoo, Reddy, and Dorasamy (2014) (22) concur with this point of view. They point out that every human being is entitled to quality education from a philosophical standpoint. Everyone should have equal opportunities to develop their potential, be recognized, and be respected for their human dignity. Several prerequisites must be met for inclusive education to succeed, according to Naidoo et al. (2014) (22). Their recommendations include.

- Providing various forms of support, such as allowing a flexible curriculum for some pupils,
- Providing well- trained and prepared special education teachers, and
- Modifying school cultures to go beyond tolerance to acceptance.

Using an inclusive approach to education, Stainback et al. (1992) (26) assert that all children can learn without being constrained by their differences. They justify their argument, saying that whatever benefits accrue to members of a society are the heritage of all people and not solely the individual non-disabled members of that society. Everyone should be recognized as a full member of the human family regardless of their abilities. In their article, Stainback et al. (1992) (26) advocate that persons with disabilities should be seen, heard, and acknowledged simultaneously.

It is still an issue that is widely discussed in policy debates and expert research (Amka, 2019); Lambrecht et al., 2020; Nurhadisah, 2019) (4,14,23). Therefore, an intelligent solution must meet children with special needs' educational needs (Efendi & Malang, 2018) (10). The government provides inclusive education programs through regular schools as one of its efforts to expand opportunities for children with special needs and distribute educational services in an equitable manner (Aas, 2019) (3).

Implementing inclusive education should eliminate discriminatory educational practices and ensure that all children with special needs receive the education they require. Furthermore, inclusive education provides a massive opportunity for children with special needs to receive the appropriate education according to their needs (Nurhadisah, 2019; Wardah, 2019) (23, 30). There are three dimensions to inclusive educational institutions: Physical inclusion, curriculum inclusion, and social inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) (5). The logical consequence that all implementers in educational institutions must accept is that they must accept students without exception, including students who experience physical, behavioural, and psychosocial obstacles in traditional schools that children attend with special needs (Ormord, 2008) (24).

Special Educational Needs' As 'Barriers' to Inclusion
Mitchell (2000) argues that identifying children with special education needs is discriminatory and unfair. 'Special educational needs are considered barriers to inclusion, according to Ainscow. According to Clough& Corbett (2000), "The concept of special education, particularly in this country, is a barrier. It does not contribute to the inclusive education agenda. "It hinders progress" (Clough & Corbett, 2000). Jha (2002) (18) further states that the Salamanca Framework of Action declared inclusive education the norm.

Benefits of Inclusive Education
Children learn social skills more readily in an environment that approximates average growth and development condition in the inclusive education paradigm. Mitchell and Brown (1991) (20) report that children who are with diverse and different learning and physical abilities staying in the same classroom to learn side by side. In age-appropriate general education classes in local schools that provide high-quality instruction, interventions, and assistance to

meet the primary academic curriculum, irrespective pf any difficulties they may have, Educators need to acknowledge that children with disabilities can learn and perform optimally as their age-mates without limitations.

Consequently, these children should be included in all educational activities in their classrooms and the neighbourhood, Students can participate in excursions, academic debates. Student can participate in excursions, academic debates, student government, sports, and other activities. It is often gratifying to see that children and youth with physical disabilities can function more effectively in schools and communities where physical and programmatic accessibility is made.   In addition, such environmental modifications make access to the environment easier for those without disabilities (Ferguson, 1996) (11). Over recent years, the concept of universal design has evolved into a description of physical, curricular, and pedagogical changes necessary for everyone. Without adaptation or retrofitting (Center for Universal Design, 1997) (7). It helps children appreciate diversity to attend classroom settings that demonstrate the differences and similarities in the world. A child's education must introduce him or her to the world's reality beyond the walls of just an academic environment. Persons with disabilities will inevitably be unable to participate in educational, social, recreational, and economic activities if their environment and accessibility needs are unmet (Steinfeld, Duncan, & Cardell, 1977) (27). Thus, architects, designers, engineers, and environmental scientists should make early design and programming decisions using their best judgment. Playing and learning alongside other children of different cultures and abilities assist children growing in understanding people that are unique in skills due to physical, social, or other challenges. Children who are allowed to play together without segregation also develop a culture of respect for each other. Asides from academic education and learning made available to children in school, friendships are developed, and social skills are learnt. Including children with special needs in regular classes expands their social network, making them fell included. All parents want their children to be happy and accepted by their peers and to have a healthy life and education. Interacting and learning with other students in the school positively impacts a child with special needs' academic performance, personality, and ability to meet expectations. Inclusive education in the classroom reduces stigmatization and helps such children succeed.

Conclusion

The Nigerian education system needs significant reform, with the policy to include students with special needs in regular classrooms. First and foremost, all superstitious beliefs about disabilities need eradication to ensure longterm success for people with disabilities in education and the community. Accurate documentation of children and youth with disabilities is crucial for effective programming. Additionally, all school officials must prioritise the proper deployment of special educators at primary and secondary school levels. It is ethically pointless for school officials and legislators to make ill-informed assessments about special education or even general education. Government officials should not only endorse protocols of special education that have not ben adequately evaluated or researched in developing countries.

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