

Schooling of Child with Special Need

Parent Involvement and Participation

“we are almost as good as specialists in our child’s case, although we don’t have a certificate...we know that teachers may have more knowledge than we have but no one knows our child better than his parents who care for him every day”

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents parents account of their experiences with regard to their child’s (with special need) schooling. This paper will explore the degree of parental involvement when their children with special needs are integrated in mainstream schools It firstly provides a historical overview of the development of educational policies in India. This is necessary because, during the last few decades, India has witnessed rapid changes in its policy agendas and in the discourses regarding ‘special’ education, and the establishment of programmes for disabled students.

This paper has explored the parents' involvement, participation and experiences in the school setting. For most of the parents, the school is the place where they experienced and struggled negligence.

Keyword: *Inclusion, Special Education, Integration*

I. INTRODUCTION

Each child is unique in their own way. Some are brilliant, others may be dull. But regardless of these differences, everyone has the same right to develop their potential. Inclusive education protects the rights of all disabled students by integrating disabled and non-disabled children into regular classes with the provision of additional help for the disabled. One of the many factors that determine the success of inclusion is parental support and involvement. Parents are known to be their children's first teachers and continue to influence their children's learning and development throughout their lives. Parental involvement can have a major impact on a child's learning, regardless of their social or cultural background.

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Parental involvement continues to be the focus of much of academic research, policy making and public debate. The role that parental involvement plays in children's academic performance has been a topic of great interest to educators for at least the past four decades.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to presents Parents account of their struggle and experience in school setting in their own words of expression when their children with disability/disabilities are integrated in mainstream school. Moreover, this approach explored picture of parents' experience and difficulties they encountered in their child's integration.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study is to evaluate the degree of parental involvement when their children with special needs are integrated in mainstream school.

II. Methodology

The present paper is based on the pilot study as part of a Post-doctoral work, utilized a descriptive analysis which comprised a semi-structured in-depth interview of 6 parents, three parents from the mainstream school and three from special school; which was adopted in an attempt to arrive at a better understanding of the experience of the parents. The interviews were conducted in a fairly conversational style and parents remained more open and freer in unfolding their stories. Their views and experiences were therefore elicited in greater details. Each interview lasted 35

to 50 minutes. In addition, as the researcher knew the best about the design of the study, she had conducted the interviews by herself. During the phone-interviews, there was no recording and key notes had been jotted down for further analysis.

GROWTH OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Historically, persons with disabilities in India have enjoyed coexistence with the general mass, though at different times, their treatment and attitudes toward them varied but they were never excluded from society by confinement in institutions. Rather, they lived with their families. As far as education was concerned, even the *Gurukula Ashram* (educational institutes) promoted the basic educational principles of special education, for example, ascertaining the abilities and needs of each pupil, individualization of teaching targets and methods to match their skills and interests, and preparing them to meet the social expectations of their prospective interests.

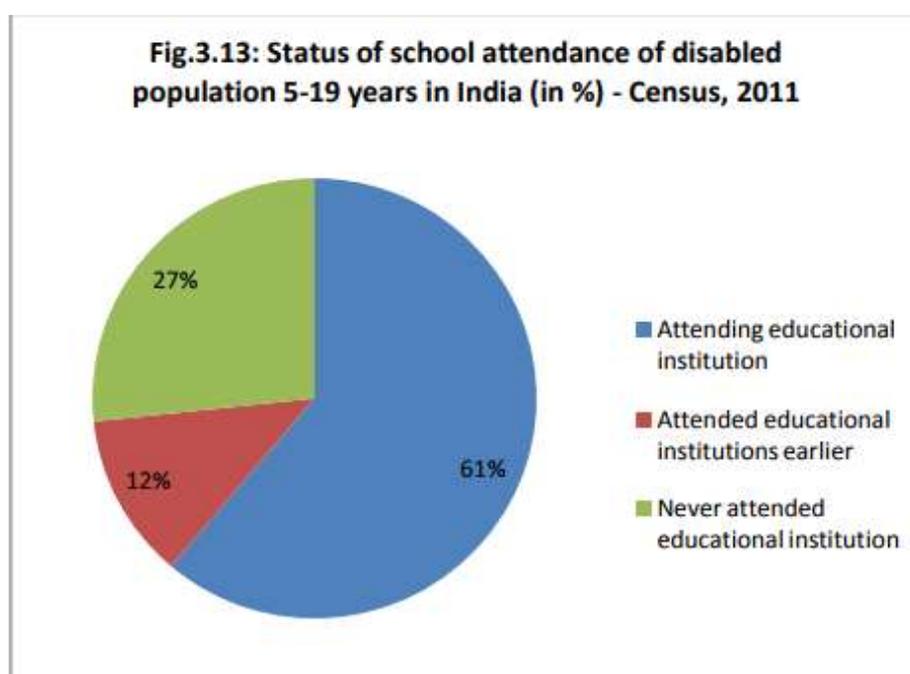
The formal education of children with disabilities began in India in 1869 when Jane Leupot, with the support of the Church Missionary Society, started a school for "blind students" in Benares (Alur, 2002).

Formal educational institutions were established for the blind in 1887, for the deaf in 1888, and for mentally deficient in 1934 (Misra, 2000). After these early establishments in the late 19th century or early 20th century, a growth was seen in the establishment of these institutions in the latter half of the 20th century. After independence from Great Britain in 1947, there was a systematic development of special education in India that saw the

establishment of 81 schools between 1960 and 1975. By 1979, the number of special education centres was 150. With the establishment of the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped (NIMH) in 1986 and others soon after, the availability of trained personnel and suitable models of service made the growth of special schools for children with disabilities very significant.

In India, there are 27 million people with special needs, in a population of 1.2 billion. This means that about 2.2% of our population has special needs.

About 4.6 million people are in the age group 10–19 years. The picture for 0–6 years is bleaker, with about 2 million in these age group having special needs. They often have trouble with access to education. According to the Census, only 61% of children with special needs (CWSN) aged 5–19 attended educational institutions of any sort.



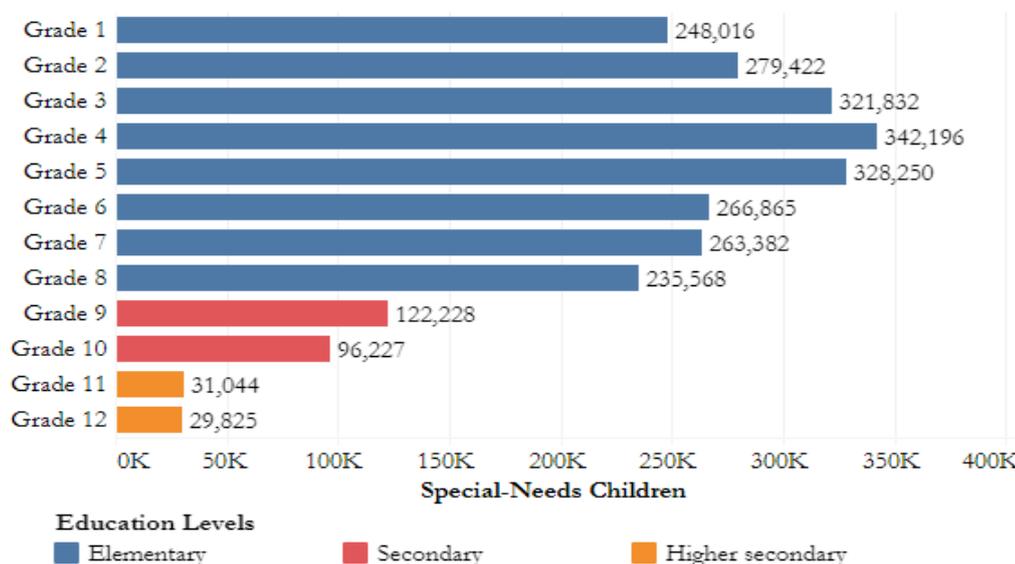
Source: Census of India, 2011

And those are the ones that we know of! Many cases are not reported due to misconceptions, societal fears, or lack of diagnosis.

UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability in India 2000 states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. The Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998) reports that out of India's 200 million school-aged children (6–14 years), 20 million require special needs education. While the national average for gross enrolment in school is over 90 per cent, less than five per cent of children with disabilities are in schools.

CURRENT SITUATION IN INDIA

89% School-Going Children With Special-Needs Are In Elementary School, 2% In Higher Secondary



Source: District Information System for Education, 2015–16

Many special needs children do not get the education they need. While 89% are enrolled in primary school, that number drops to 8.5% in secondary school. Only 2.3% of special needs children reach higher secondary (11th and 12th).

ATTITUDE OF SCHOOL STAFF

Parents were interviewed on their perception of the attitude of school staff towards integrating their children into mainstream school. Parents' views would shed light on their willingness to participate and would also reflect the difficulties they would encounter.

A positive attitude on the part of school professionals involved in the education of disabled children can actually set the pace for the realization of the child's full potential. Conversely, the teacher's negative attitudes are likely to have a negative effect on the child's overall school adjustment, self-esteem, and other non-disabled students' reactions to the child.

Most parents reported that their child's difference was always perceived negatively and turned into guilt.

The headmaster's disabling attitudes were a particularly significant obstacle to promoting an inclusive school culture. A mother said: My daughter is now in a special classroom along with seven other disabled children. They all have mild disabilities. But those children did not participate in the general lessons ... We and the special teacher do not believe that there are problems in our children who study with other [non-disabled] children in regular

classes. So, we asked the principal several times to allow our children to attend regular classes ... but he didn't accept it. "

Given these unfavorable circumstances, for many parents, keeping their children in a regular school was a stressful daily battle against teachers' negative attitudes.

UNAVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SCHOOL

It is not difficult to imagine that the teacher's daily degradation has damaged the child's self-esteem and generated a feeling of isolation and segregation. One mother said: "It is very difficult to find a good and understanding teacher, but what most parents found and learned through their interaction with the teachers at the school was the lack of support and the unsympathetic attitude.

In her experience, the disabling attitudes of school teachers and the negative treatment of the disabled child were the norm. Consequently, for most of the parents in this study, protecting their children from teacher abuse and addressing their negative and discriminatory attitudes were the most stressful and painful experiences associated with their children's schooling.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL STAFF

Most parents haven't had great opportunities to discuss their children's progress with school staff. The main communication channel was based only on Father's Day and telephone conversation. The opportunity to have a discussion with school staff in formal meetings is rare. One mother expressed: "... if I want to talk to them about my son, they refuse; they just say "I know those children" ... but our children are all different ... they have different characteristics ... I would like to give you specific information and advice about my child ".

Regarding the outcome of the communication, some parents stated that they often participated in the decision-making process for their children during the discussion process with school staff. Most of them said they were not involved in the decision-making process.

BARRIER TO BUILD PARTNERSHIP

During the time the child is in school, parents come into contact with various school professionals in both mainstream and special schools. Regardless of their specific circumstances, the parents in this study stressed that achieving a collaborative relationship between teachers and parents is a precondition for their child's effective educational and social development. However, many parents reported that they faced significant obstacles in establishing partnerships with school teachers and receiving collaborative support from them.

The disabling values inflicted on a disabled child generally carry over to the teachers' attitude towards parents. When teachers viewed children as an inferior group or a burden, they did not welcome parents to school and did not see them as clients. In fact, some of the parents reported being treated unfairly and not receiving the same respect as other parents.

It has been widely emphasized that sharing knowledge and information based on mutual respect is a vital component in developing harmonious and collaborative relationships between teachers and parents. This is particularly important for parents of disabled children. Many of the participants in this study believed that their knowledge and experience could provide an important resource for facilitating good relationships between their child and the teacher. As one mother noted: "I call the teacher and ask for a meeting to talk about my son. If he agrees, I show the documents to the teacher, explain my child's educational programs so far, why he might be acting `` weird " and how the teacher should respond to this ... and say 'If he has any difficulty teaching my child, always send me an email or a phone and I'll see what I can do to help overcome the problem "

As above, many parents find it vital to share their knowledge and experience with teachers to ensure appropriate support and effective teaching for their children. However, their voices are often ignored, denied and devalued by the school teachers.

Parents should be able to participate in decision making and influence the functioning of educational services. They wanted to play a supporting role or be co-planners in promoting the personal and educational development of their children. However, parents were not always welcomed and considered partners by teachers. Parents' efforts to make their voices heard and ensure their commitment to education on behalf of their children have often been perceived as a threat to teachers' authority.

Most parents of children in mainstream school stressed that their efforts to integrate the child's education were easily ignored and even treated as selfish or selfish behavior.

Parents generally had a realistic understanding that schools have limited resources and expressed sympathy for teachers' determination to meet students' needs, often despite poor teaching conditions (eg large classes). cut it). The parents also recognized that many of the difficulties they were experiencing, such as the unavailability of teaching assistants and personal assistants, could not be solved with the efforts of teachers alone. Therefore, they considered various ways to increase support for disabled children through increased cooperation between teachers and parents. However, the parents argued that there was a significant gap between the parental and the teacher's understanding of "the responsibility of the disabled child". Parents believed that teachers took minimal responsibility for disabled students, but teachers often denied it. Many of the parents reported being forced to stay in school and were often criticized by teachers if not. "Being in chains", as the father says (below), was a general phenomenon in ordinary schools and sometimes even in special schools.

The ethics of the association was perceived as one of the most important factors in determining the quality of the disabled child's education. The parents firmly believed that by working together, better solutions could be found within existing resources. However, the desire of many parents to develop collaborative relationships with teachers has often been underestimated by disrespect, a reluctance to listen to parental voices.

ABSENCE OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND NEGLIGENCE ON THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD

One of the most common complaints from parents centered on the deprivation of adequate educational opportunities and the neglect of the child's needs, both in special and mainstream schools. Parents who sent their children to special schools generally expected the child to receive more relevant educational services than ordinary

schools. They hoped that teachers would be more sensitive to the talent and professional knowledge of their children's potential development and preparation for adult life. However, his expectations and reality were very different. The general impression created by parents whose son was enrolled in a special school was that the school offered little more than childcare and lacked encouragement. A mother explained why she moved her son to a regular school. "Only two or three students were interacting with the teacher ... the others were just sitting there ... there are no educational advantages ... but, if my child attended a regular school, he could learn a lot from disabled children at least they would interact. "

Some parents were very critical of special schools. They pointed to their children's narrow curriculum and lack of academic progress. Some of these parents felt that their children were not given the opportunity to reach their potential. The special school often acts to limit disabled students to the "intended limitation", closing the door on the opportunity to learn because they are not expected to succeed. The poor quality of educational provision in special schools has often caused parents to internalize the low expectations of their disabled child.

According to a policy statement, special classes have been introduced in mainstream schools to support the inclusion of disabled pupils and provide a resource room where the child's special educational needs are met. However, this support is often non-existent.

In addition to the lack of opportunities to receive adequate education, many parents of children in mainstream schools reported that their child had been barred from participating in normal school activities. One mother commented: Our children have never gone with other children for outdoor school activities, camping, or on school trips. We believe that ... since our children [in the special class] are also students of the [general] school, it is right that they enjoy playing and participating in school activities with others.

III. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the parents' participation and experiences in the school setting. For most parents, school was a place where they witnessed, experienced and fought with neglect and disabling attitude. Disabling values are attested in schools and lead to the direct dehumanization of disabled children by both administration and teachers, many of the parents also reported that their child did not participate in normal school activities and was denied the opportunity for education due to lack of support. Despite this hostile environment, most parents sought better solutions through active participation in school. Many parents have even tried to be actively involved in creating healthy and positive relationships between their children.

The provision of support to parents seemed insufficient in the study, as most parents said they rely on outside specialists and some said they did not have the support of other parents. Therefore, multiple support groups to help parents can relieve their stress and address their problems. Regarding the role of the school, most parents asked school staff to improve communication between parents and the school.

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