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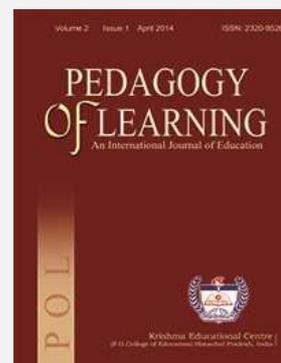
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Perception of Parents of Children with Special Needs towards Educational Inclusion in Neighborhood Elementary Schools

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to find out the perception of parents of CWSN towards educational inclusion of children with special needs in neighborhood elementary schools. The investigators have decided to adopt descriptive survey method. Total 40 parents have been taken as sample of the study. Three tools have been developed to collect the data i.e. perception scale for parents, interview schedule for parents and guidelines for Focus Group Discussion with parents. In order to give a detailed and balanced picture of the perception of parents of CWSN, to present a more richness viewpoint and to meet the complexity of the issue three tools have been developed in view of triangulation technique. Majority of CWSN enrolled in elementary schools are visually impaired (23.75%), 12.5% are hearing impaired, 10% CWSN have language and speech impairment and 3.75% children are having physical impairments. Findings of the study present that 45% parents of CWSN are aware of educational inclusion in neighborhood elementary schools, while 55% parents of CWSN are

not aware of educational inclusion in neighborhood elementary schools. Sixty two percent parents of CWSN are aware about the academic progress of their children in neighborhood elementary schools. Whereas 37 % parents of CWSN are not aware of academic progress of their child. Most of the parents have reported lack of proper infrastructure facilities for CWSN, rigid curriculum, unwilling teachers, unfamiliar language, lack of fund, lack of initiatives from high level authorities are barriers to educational inclusion in neighborhood elementary schools.

Keywords: Educational Inclusion, Children with Special Needs, Neighborhood Elementary Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational inclusion means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Educational inclusion means involving students with diverse needs in general education classrooms with chronological age-appropriate classmates, having individualized and relevant learning objectives, and being provided with the support necessary to learn (e.g., special education and related services). Parental perception in this study indicates awareness of the elements of inclusive environment through direct experiences which parents gain when their children study in neighborhood schools. Children with special needs are those who differ from the average to such a degree in physical or psychological characteristics, that school programs designed for the majority of children do not afford them opportunity for all round adjustment and optimum progress, and who therefore need either special instruction or in some cases special ancillary services, or both, to achieve a level commensurate with their respective abilities. Neighborhood school means the nearest primary/upper primary school within walking distance from the child's residence.

The neighborhood elementary school concept relates to availability of a school within safe and accessible distance from the habitation where a child lives. The limits of neighborhood elementary schools are within 1 km walking distance from the habitation of a child at the primary level i.e. class 1 to 5 (Right to Education Platform, 2013).

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There exists considerable research regarding the effects of parental involvement in the field of general education. Researchers have explored parental involvement and perception in numerous settings to determine the role parental involvement played in student achievement and to what extent this involvement influenced student performance. In an effort to identify key aspects of parental involvement that contributed to academic success, Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1992) conducted research on parental views, their involvement in their children's education, and this involvement's impact on student achievement. Findings revealed that parents who had a positive view of their role in their children's education participated more with homework activities and classroom volunteering. Their children also exhibited higher achievement levels and their children's teachers felt more capable of influencing student achievement because of the higher level of support coming from the

parents. Building on the findings of previous research indicating the positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. Hoover -Dempsey and Sandler (1995) deduced that (a) parents must have believed that being involved in their children's education encompassed their role as a parent; (b) they must have obtained a certain level of satisfaction from their involvement and felt empowered by it; and (c) they must have become involved because they perceived an invitation or a demand by either their children or the school to become involved. As a result of having internalized these beliefs, parents then engaged in specific behaviors such as instructing children at home and participating in school activities which contributed to academic success. Ariza (2000) explored parent-teacher interaction from the American perspective. The researcher presented various examples of teacher-student and parent-teacher interactions. Ariza (2000) provided specific activities that teachers could initiate to better engage minority parents and educate them regarding the expectations and components of parental involvement within the American educational system. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) reviewed research on parental involvement in an attempt to determine why parents became involved in their children's education and how this involvement impacted student achievement. Based on the research they reviewed by assisting with homework completion, parents were able to positively impact student achievement because they helped children to develop such skills as motivation, self-empowerment and self-control. These skills were found to be conducive to school success. Hoover-Dempsey Battiato, Walker, Reed, Dejong & Jones (2001) suggested that schools take steps to increase parental involvement in homework completion. In their research, Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2004) studied Latino parents to determine whether educational programs aimed at increasing parental knowledge would have a positive impact on parental involvement. Parents were surveyed before and after participating in a nine week educational program. Some of the topics covered were: home learning activities, parental attendance at PTA meetings, parental knowledge regarding curriculum standards, and parental expectations for children. Results from the study revealed that there was a strong correlation between parents' knowledge and their involvement. The researchers stated that parenting practices may have exerted a strong influence on parental knowledge and ultimately involvement. In yet another example of the interaction between parents and teachers and how it impacted parental involvement, Ginsberg and Herman-Ginsberg (2005) conducted survey research with teachers on parent-teacher interactions. The study compared National Board for Professional Teaching Standard (NBPTS) and non-NBPTS teachers on five factors. The factors were whether: (a) teachers had positive attitudes and practices when working with parents, (b) there were strategies for working with parents who needed more support, (c) teachers made a concerted effort to reach parents, (d) teachers were reaching minority parents, and (e) teachers understood the value of continuous contact with parents. The findings revealed that the NBPTS-certified teachers were more positive than their counterparts in working with parents. They were also more likely to value parental involvement and to view it as a meaningful tool.

The literature revealed that parental involvement was closely aligned with parental culture, values and beliefs. It also revealed that parents' perceptions of their children influenced their interaction with those children as well as their interaction with the school (Gregoire, 2010). The present study extended the body of knowledge by conducting research with parents of children with special needs. The focus of the research is to identify how parents of children with special needs perceive educational inclusion in neighborhood schools

and how they perceive their own children as a result of providing inclusive education. Finally, this research study sought to identify the supports and/or barriers which their children are facing.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the perception of parents of CWSN towards educational inclusion of CWSN in neighborhood schools.
2. To examine perception of parents of CWSN about barriers to educational inclusion in the neighborhood schools.

Research Questions

1. How do the parents of CWSN perceive education of their children with special needs in inclusive setting at neighborhood schools?
2. What do the parents of CWSN see as barriers to the educational inclusion in neighborhood schools?

III. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The study has been carried out following descriptive survey method. The sample consists of 40 parents of CWSN studying in 08 neighborhood government elementary schools. The investigators developed three tools such as: perception scale for parents, interview schedule for parents and focus group discussion with parents for data collection. In order to give a detailed and balanced picture of the perception of parents of CWSN, to present a more richness viewpoint and to meet the complexity of the issue three tools were developed in view of triangulation technique. The tools were validated by 5 experts in the field. Content validity of the tools was established. The tools were developed to validate the data with the help of triangulation method. Data were validated from three sources with the help of perception scale for parents, interview schedule for parents and focus group discussion with parents.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Objective 1: Perception of parents of CWSN towards educational inclusion of CWSN in neighborhood elementary schools. Fifty percent mothers' perception of CWSN and 50% fathers' perception of CWSN have been analyzed in this section. Majority of CWSN enrolled in schools are visually impaired (23.75%), 12.5% are hearing impaired, 10% CWSN have language and speech impairment and 3.75% children are having physical impairments.

Table 1
Awareness about Educational Inclusion

Items	Parents' Perception (N=40)	
	Yes	No
Awareness about Concept of Educational Inclusion	18(45%)	22(55%)
Awareness about Academic Progress of Children	25(62.5%)	15(37.5%)
Awareness about Participation in Co-curricular activities	21(52.5%)	19(47.5%)
Expression of Anxiety/Difficulty by the Child	27(67.5%)	13(32.5%)
Feeling of Discrimination in Academic Activities by the Child	29(72.5%)	11(27.5%)
Benefit of Educational Inclusion in Neighborhood Schools	38(95%)	2(5%)
Attitude of Teachers towards CWSN	Positive	Negative
Percentage of Parents' Perception	30(75%)	10(25%)
Teacher Motivation for Participating in Classroom Activities	21(52.5%)	19(47.5%)
Special Programmes for Educational Inclusion	28(70%)	12(30%)
Adoption of New Methods or Techniques	21(52.5%)	19(47.5%)
Appointment of Resource Teacher	7(17.5%)	33(82.5%)
Use of Assistive Technology	29(72.5%)	11 (27.5%)
Infrastructure Facilities	20(50%)	20(50%)

Respondents are asked to indicate as to whether they are aware of inclusive education system. Findings of the study present that 45% respondents are aware of it, while 55% respondents are not aware of educational inclusion in neighborhood schools. It is reported from the above table that 62.5% of parents are aware about the academic progress of their children in neighborhood schools. Whereas 37.5% parents are not aware of academic progress of their child. It is observed that 52.5% parents report about participation in co-curricular activities, whereas, 47.5% parents have expressed about limited resources and insensitive teachers in neighborhood schools. The above table indicate that 32.5% parents have reported that their children do not express any difficulty or feeling of anxiety while participating in various activities of the school whereas 67.5% parents reported that their children face difficulty in performing various activities. The above table represents the view of parents on discrimination by teachers in inclusive classroom. 72.5% parents of children with special needs have responded that their children face discrimination by teachers in inclusive class. The above table shows that 75% (30) CWSN parents' are of the view that teachers' attitude towards the CWSN was positive. Twenty five percent parents reports that attitude of teachers' towards CWSN is negative. Ninety five percent parents report about the benefits of educational inclusion in neighborhood schools (table-1). Fifty two percent parents report that teachers motivate students to participate in inclusive classroom. (Table-1). It is observed from the above table that 70% parents report that special programmes are conducted in neighborhood schools for educational inclusion. Fifty two percent parents also report as mentioned below about adoption of new methods in teaching learning process (table-1). Only

17% respondents have indicated about appointment of resource teachers in their school as mentioned in table no 1 .The above table indicates that 72.5% parents report about use of assistive technology in inclusive classroom. Fifty percent parents have reported about infrastructure facilities for CWSN as indicated in the above table.

Analysis of Objective 2: parents' perception about educational inclusion as supports and barriers to the education of their children. Parents of CWSN have reported the following barriers to educational inclusion in neighborhood elementary schools.

Barriers: *Physical Barriers:* schools don't have the facilities to properly accommodate students with special needs, and local governments lack either the funds or the resolve to provide financial help(68% parents' perception). *Curriculum:* A rigid curriculum that does not allow for experimentation or the use of different teaching methods can be an enormous barrier to inclusion (61% parents' perception). *Teachers:* Teachers who are not trained or who are unwilling or unenthusiastic about working with differently abled students are a drawback to successful inclusion (71%parents'perception). *Language and communication:* Many students are expected to learn while being taught in a language that is new and in some cases unfamiliar to them (42% parents' perception). *Funding:* Schools often lack adequate facilities, qualified and properly-trained teachers and other staff members, educational materials and general support (86% parents' perception). *Organization of the Education System:* Decisions come from the school system's high-level authorities whose initiatives focus more on employee compliance rather than quality learning (42% parents' perception).

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- i. Majority of CWSN enrolled in schools are visually impaired (23.75%), 12.5% are hearing impaired, 10% CWSN have language and speech impairment and 3.75% children are having physical impairments.
- ii. Findings of the study present that 45% parents of CWSN are aware of educational inclusion in neighborhood schools, while 55% parents of CWSN are not aware of educational inclusion in neighborhood schools.
- iii. It is reported that 62 % of parents of CWSN are aware about the academic progress of their children in neighborhood schools. Whereas 37 % parents of CWSN are not aware of academic progress of their child.
- iv. It is observed that 52 % parents of CWSN report about participation in co-curricular activities, whereas, 47 % parents of CWSN have expressed about limited resources and insensitive teachers in neighborhood schools.
- v. It is indicated that 32.5% parents of CWSN have reported that their children do not express any difficulty or feeling of anxiety while participating in various activities of the school whereas 67.5% parents of CWSN reported that their children face difficulty in performing various activities.72.5% parents of children with special needs have responded that their children face discrimination by teachers in inclusive class.

- vi. It is reported that 75% (30) CWSN parents' are of the view that teachers' attitude towards the CWSN was positive. Twenty five percent parents of CWSN reports that attitude of teachers' towards CWSN is negative. Ninety five percent parents of CWSN report about the benefits of educational inclusion in neighborhood schools. Fifty two percent parents of CWSN report that teachers motivate students to participate in inclusive classroom.
- vii. It is found that 70% parents of CWSN report that special programmes are conducted in neighborhood schools for educational inclusion. Fifty two percent parents of CWSN also report as mentioned below about adoption of new methods in teaching learning process. Only 17% parents of CWSN have indicated about appointment of resource teachers in their school. It is found that 72.5% parents of CWSN report about use of assistive technology in inclusive classroom. Fifty percent parents of CWSN have reported about infrastructure facilities for CWSN in neighborhood schools.
- viii. Most of the parents have reported lack of proper infrastructure facilities for CWSN, rigid curriculum, unwilling teachers, unfamiliar language, lack of fund, lack of initiatives from high level authorities are barriers to educational inclusion in neighborhood schools.

VI. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Government need to take measures to improve the education of special needs children by providing them instructional materials and aids and equipments in the school. Administrator need to visit schools regularly and need to provide financial support for the education of special needs children. Lack of parental support is one of the main causes of failure of special needs children. Thus, parents need encouragement, help and need to be involved in the education and need to provide remedial instructional material for the education of their special needs children. Teachers play an important role for the upbringing of children especially with special needs children. They need to provide healthy environment, need to take personal care of special needs children, and need to teach them according to their needs in the school to boost the academic success of special needs children. Government need to emphasize more on educational inclusion in neighborhood elementary schools. Therefore, it is essential to provide better resource facilities, resource teacher, aids and equipments in the inclusive settings.

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