Educational Approaches for Learners with Diverse Needs

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Abstract : Inclusion accepts students for who they are and requires that schools and systems change to accommodate their needs, rather than the reverse. Inclusive education moves away from the idea of the child as a problem to the idea of an education system that takes account of individual differences and needs and works constructively to enable all students to reach their full potential. Inclusive education is about changing the education system and improving schools to better meet the diverse needs of all learners. After the adoption of inclusive education world-wide, there is a paradigm shift in the educational strategies adopted by teachers in the classroom to deliver the content. Based on the principles of psychology the teacher-centered teaching strategies have been replaced by the individualized instructional strategies to meet the individual educational needs of the students in a diverse classroom. The present paper explains different strategies to be used in an inclusive classroom for the learners with diverse needs.

Keywords: Inclusive education, CWSN, Teaching strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION :

All children, including children with special educational needs, have a right to an education which is appropriate to their needs. The aims of education for pupils with special educational needs are the same as apply to all children. Education should be about enabling all children, in line with their abilities, to live full and independent lives so that they can contribute to their communities, cooperate with other people and continue to learn throughout their lives.

At the core of inclusive education is the human right to education. Various international documents specify the principles of inclusion for guiding the states towards their efforts to introduce rights-based approach to education. According to UNICEF, an education system is inclusive if it "includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn. No-one should be excluded. Every child has a right to inclusive education, including children with disabilities" (UNICEF, 2017).

Inclusion accepts students for who they are and requires that schools and systems change to accommodate their needs, rather than the reverse. Inclusive education moves away from the idea of the child as a problem to the idea of an education system that takes account of individual differences and needs and works constructively to enable all students to reach their full potential. Inclusive education is about changing the education system and improving schools to better meet the diverse needs of all learners.

The inclusive approach in the education is based on the assumption that all the students irrespective of their abilities, physical deformities or mental capacities have the right to be included in the mainstream of the education. It only requires the change in the attitude of all the stakeholders and the strategies to teach and deliver the content. In addition, the removal of the barriers to learn for all the learners is also required.

Inclusive education is a human-rights based approach that is reflected in a number of international commitments including the:

● United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1989, articles 2, 23, 28 and 29);

● Jomtien Conference: World Declaration on Education For All (1990);

● Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994);

● Dakar Conference for Education for All: Dakar Framework for Action (2000).

Inclusive education is about making sure that schools are places where all learners feel welcome and happy, and where all learners are taught and cared for according to their needs. Adopting a whole-school approach to inclusion means that the school management, head , teachers, ministerial staff and even the normal students of the school, too, must take responsibility for creating a secure, accepting, collaborating and stimulating community in which everyone is valued.

2. Educational Approaches for Inclusive Education :

Good teaching and learning strategies make a huge difference to every child in the class, regardless of their abilities, interests, and socio-cultural background. But for some children there is a need for more particular strategies to help them overcome particular learning barriers.

Earlier, there was a concept that to teach the children with diverse needs in a special school only by the teachers having the knowledge of teaching skills to teach such students. By doing so, they were not get an opportunity to be included in a normal classroom. However, after the adoption of inclusive education world-wide, there is a paradigm shift in the educational strategies adopted by teachers in the classroom to deliver the content. Based on the principles of psychology the teacher-centered teaching strategies have been replaced by the individualized instructional strategies to meet the individual educational needs of the students in a diverse classroom.

The teachers must design such instructional designs using which they are able to help the CWSN acquiring the knowledge and skills in a normal classroom. For this task the teacher must the knowledge about the characteristics and the learning styles of the learners in an inclusive classroom. In addition, the teacher is also required to have knowledge about different kinds of learning resources to be used in an inclusive classroom suiting to the needs of the all the students.

Inclusive teaching strategies are intended to ensure that all students feel supported such that they freely learn and explore new ideas, feel safe to express their views in a civil manner, and respected as individuals and members of groups. Intentionally incorporating inclusive teaching strategies helps students view themselves as people who belong to the community of learners in a classroom

Some of such educational approaches designed for an inclusive education are discussed below.

2.1 Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring in its simplest form involves a student helping another student learn a skill or task. The word "Peer tutoring" as explained "peer" means somebody who is equal to another person or to other people in some respect such as age, class, level. "Tutor" means teacher who teaches an individual student or a small group of students.

According to Lisi (1999) Peer tutoring is defined as "an educational practice in which a student interact other student to attain educational goal" .

Damon and Phelp (1989) stated that "Peer Tutoring is an approach in which one student/child instructs another child in material on which the first is expert and second is novice (learner/trainee)".

In an inclusive classroom the peer-tutoring may consist of peer tutors assisting students with significant disabilities in general education classes (McDonnell, Mathot-Buckner, Thorson & Fister, 2001). As an educational approach peer-tutoring is useful in a way that the students with disabilities in the class get an opportunity to learn the content and skills from a student of their own class. As a result, not only the academic behaviour is developed but their social skills are also enhanced. In addition, the emotional support is also provided to the students with diverse needs (SWSN). It helps SWSN increasing their self-esteem and motivation to learn.

Peer tutoring, thus, means normal students teaching the SWSN. This instructional strategy increases response opportunities for SWSN, provides additional time for positive feedback, and increases the amount of time the students are on-task.

Peer tutoring will also help the peer tutors as while assisting students, peer facilitators learn how to engage with learners of all abilities, a variety of methods of communication and different learning styles, how to respond to challenging behaviors, how to work as part of a team, and how to be flexible and think quickly on your feet.

2.1.1 Types of Peer Tutoring

i)   **Same Age Peer Tutoring**: In such type of peer-tutoring the peers of the same age are paired to learn from each other or to review key concepts. The students may either have similar ability levels or a more advanced student can be paired with less advanced students. In an inclusive classroom the students having more knowledge of the concepts taught by the teacher, is assigned the role of tutor. Even a student with any physical disability, if having mastery over the content, can be assigned the role of tutor.

ii)   **Cross Age Peer Tutoring:** In this type of tutoring the older students are paired with younger students to teach or review a concept or skill. In this, the positions of tutor and tutee are not changed. The older student serves as the tutor and the younger student is the tutee. Students with disabilities may also serve as tutors for younger students, if they are competent to teach.

iii)   **Class-wide Peer Tutoring**: This kind of teaching strategy is based on reciprocal peer tutoring and group reinforcement. Teacher creates pairs of students that alternately fill the roles of tutor and students. Hence, entire class participates simultaneously in tutoring pairs. While the procedures and routines in class-wide peer tutoring remain the same, student pairings or groups may change weekly or bi-weekly.

2.1.2 Procedure of Peer Tutoring

Following are the steps to be followed in a peer-tutoring approach.

➤   At first, the orientation is given to students about Peer Tutoring Programme.

➤   After the orientation, the peer tutors, who are interested and capable, are selected as tutors.

➤   It is followed by the design and development of the instructional activity to be carried out by the student tutor. It includes developing special modules, worksheets and recording booklet for students.

➤   Now, the execution of the peer tutoring takes place.

➤   It is ended with evaluation and feedback.

2.1.3 Advantages of Peer Tutoring in an Inclusive Classroom

➤   It is an effective educational strategy for classrooms of diverse learners because it promotes academic gains as well as social enhancement.

➤   It can be successfully implemented at the classroom-level or on a wider scale at the school level.

➤   It can help teachers cope with challenges such as limited instructional time, multiple curricular requirements, and appropriate social engagement among students.

➤   The students get an opportunity to engage in active learning while staying abreast of the progress they are making.

➤   It allows teachers to address a wide range of learning needs and engages all students simultaneously.

- ➤ The collaborative learning aspect of the strategy encourages positive social interaction between students in a classroom.

- ➤   By including traditional instructional strategies along with peer tutoring, teachers can utilize the ability differences inherent in an inclusive classroom, and promote accessible and successful learning for all.

2.2 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning represents the most carefully structured end of the collaborative learning continuum. Defined as "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (Johnson et al. 1990), cooperative learning is based on the social interdependence theories of Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch.

In cooperative learning, the development of interpersonal skills is as important as the learning itself. The development of social skills in group work-learning to cooperate – is key to high quality group work. Many cooperative learning tasks are put to students with both academic objectives and social skills objectives. Many of the strategies involve assigning roles within each small group (such as recorder, participation encourager, summarizer) to ensure the positive interdependence of group participants and to enable students to practice different teamwork skills. Built into cooperative learning work is regular "group processing," a "debriefing" time where students reflect on how they are doing in order to learn how to become more effective in group learning settings.

It is particularly suited to children with special need as they may feel insecure in a competitive setting. Children having loco motor disability, learning disability and emotional disturbances often lack the opportunity for social interaction. Using cooperative learning will provide opportunities to children with special needs to develop the skills necessary for positive peer interaction.

2.2.1 Elements of Cooperative Learning

- ● *Positive Interdependence*: Each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success. Each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and task responsibilities.

- ● *Inter-personal Skills*: In cooperative learning the learners perform the learning tasks by sharing knowledge and ideas and discussing concepts. It will enhance the inter-personal skills of the students in an inclusive classroom.

- ● *Development of Social Skills*: As the cooperative learning is a group learning technique it also develops in the students many of the social skills desired for the behavioural development. The social skills which are developed through cooperative learning includes Leadership, Decision-making, Trust-building, Communication, Conflict-management skills.

2.3 Remedial Teaching
Remedial teaching strategies are designed to meet the unique learning needs of the child. Remedial teaching plans are created for each student based on their in individual learning profiles. Remediation in educational settings has become a primary service since the adoption of the UNESCO"s Salamanca statement and frame-work for action on special needs education (UNESCO 1994). Remedial education programme is as an educational programme that schools routinely use to bring low achieving students' academic performance closer to the standards of their grade in school. In other words, it is the learning and teaching programme designed to bring students who are lagging behind up to the level of achievement realized by their peers.

3. CONCLUSION :

To be successful in an inclusive classroom, the teacher needs to create such a physical and social classroom in which students with special needs feel accepted and respected and where their diversity is celebrated. Due to the vast diversity among learners, teachers must work diligently to use different methods of instruction and constantly monitor

the comprehension taking place in the classroom to enable all students in the classroom to succeed. No doubt, it is a challenging task. But the teachers need to accept and adopt the inclusive teaching strategies whole heartedly to lessen the learning difficulties of the students with special needs in the classroom. They need into account the local needs and demands of the students to address the learning difficulties of the students. Developing and designing the varied educational approaches keeping in mind the learning styles, abilities and difficulties of the students in an inclusive classroom will help teachers realizing the objective of 'Education for All.'

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