



Ways to Make a Better Teaching-Learning Environment for Children with Disabilities in Inclusive School Setup

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Abstract: Inclusive schools are schools that educate all children together. They include every student, whether disabled or non-disabled, whatever their needs, abilities or circumstances. When we talk about inclusive schools, we are talking about a model of education that caters for different needs and creates a learning environment where every child can feel included and thrive. Inclusive schools often celebrate the unique strengths of each student and recognize the importance of how each individual approach can improve the learning experience for everyone. The best inclusive schools develop and adapt over time to the changing needs of their student groups, so each school's approach will be different. Every student learns slightly differently, and inclusive education takes this into account. Inclusive education is a process or approach that ensures that no individual or group feels left out or discriminated against on any grounds, but feels valued and welcome. It involves giving equal opportunities and participation to students from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Every school tries its best to improve and modify its inclusive environment according to the needs of the students. This article discusses the ways to create a better teaching-learning environment for children with disabilities in an inclusive school system.

Key Words: Inclusive Education, Inclusive School, Inclusive Environment, Students with Disabilities, Teaching and Learning, Classroom Management, Technical Support, Human Resources, Assessment Methods, Teaching Strategies etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

School is a place of education. It is an institution where children's physical, mental, intellectual and moral qualities develop. Schools can be of mainstream, special, integrated or inclusive type. Inclusive school means an educational institution where all children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, background differences or any other type of disability are welcomed and have equal opportunity to receive education in the same class. It creates an environment where every student is made to feel valued and supported and the school system itself is adapted to meet the diverse needs of students. Inclusive education is provided in an inclusive school. Inclusive education is an educational approach that ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, background or disabilities, learn together in the same class. It promotes equal access to quality education by removing barriers and providing the necessary facilities to meet diverse learning needs. According to UNESCO, "Inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education". According to UNICEF, "Inclusive education provides students from all backgrounds with the opportunity to learn and grow together, benefiting everyone". Inclusive learning environment is being recognized worldwide not only as a basic human right but also as a way to change the face of education. This means that all children have the right to quality education and inclusive education meets their individual needs. Therefore, there is a need to create a better teaching-learning environment for children with disabilities in the inclusive school system. There are many areas in an inclusive school which can be improved to make the teaching-learning environment there better. Following is a description of these areas along with suggestions for improvement:

(I) Physical environment of the school:

The school premises should be equipped with ramps and lifts to ensure independent movement for students using wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Adequate and accessible toilets should be available for all students. Doors should be made wide enough to accommodate mobility devices. There should be designated parking spaces for physically disabled students to commute to and from the school. Classrooms for students with sensory processing disorders should



be arranged such that distractions are minimized. Special spaces should be created when required that can meet sensory needs. There should be adequate lighting and acoustic-friendly classrooms to support the learning process of all students. Classrooms should be large enough to accommodate mobility devices without any hindrance. All students need adaptive play equipment and accessible recreation areas to participate in sports. Therefore, there should be large playgrounds. Learning materials should be made available in various formats, such as Braille and audio formats, so that all students can access them. A special resource centre should be set up where special learning resources can be kept and where teachers and specialists can meet the needs. Community volunteers can be involved for tasks such as organizing resources, making repairs or helping students read.

(II) Relationships between staff and students:

The school staff should respect and empathize with each student's background and needs. Staff should motivate students so that they feel empowered and able to progress in their learning process. Staff should ensure that all students receive education according to their individual needs, not just a few special needs students. Students' interactions should be encouraged so that they feel connected to each other and to their school community. Staff should provide direct support to understand and meet the individual needs of students. Staff should regularly interact and exchange information with students, parents and other colleagues. Staff should plan with each other for inclusive education and work collaboratively to adapt their teaching practices. Staff should understand and accept cultural and linguistic diversity, so that students' backgrounds do not have a negative impact on their learning.

(III) Technological support for staff and students:

Students should have access to a variety of assistive and adaptable devices, such as audio-enabled e-books, large font text, voice input devices, and computers with touch screens. Students should have access to technologies that adapt content and teaching methods to their individual needs, allowing them to gain greater autonomy and a personalized learning experience. Devices and software should be available that help students express their ideas in a variety of ways, such as typing, drawing, and responding through voice. Students should have access to technological solutions that overcome their access barriers. Staff should be provided with continuous professional development opportunities to familiarize themselves with new technologies and tools used in inclusive education and incorporate them into their teaching. Staff should be given adequate training and time to ensure that they can use these technologies effectively and meet the diverse needs of students. There should be a dedicated technical support team that can provide the necessary support and solutions to students and staff. Staff should be encouraged to plan and work collaboratively to address inclusion issues and meet

(IV) Availability of appropriate human resources:

Inclusive schools have students with various disabilities, so availability of appropriate human resources is essential. These human resources include physicians who diagnose and treat various types of disabilities, such as physical, mental, sensory and intellectual. They help identify the causes of disability and provide relevant medical interventions. Psychologists specialize in the understanding and treatment of disabilities related to mental and emotional health. Rehabilitation specialists help individuals improve their quality of life with their disability and reintegrate into society. This may include physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists. Social workers inform disability-related policies, monitor the quality of services and coordinate with government and non-government agencies for persons with disabilities. Disability policy specialists play a role in the formulation and implementation of laws and national policies related to disability. Disability studies specialists study various social, cultural and legal aspects of disability. Their aim is to develop a deeper understanding of disability and build a more inclusive society. Special educators help children with disabilities to provide education according to their specific needs. Disability rights activists advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and strive for their full participation and equality in society. An inclusive school must have the availability of all these human resources.

(V) Appropriate classroom management:

Ramps and wide doors should be provided to access the classroom to facilitate access for students using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Furniture should be adjustable to suit the heights and needs of different students so that they can work comfortably. The classroom should have proper and comfortable lighting. Natural light as well as artificial light should be taken care of. There should be the ability to control ventilation and temperature. Stable temperature and good air quality increase student concentration. It is important to create a safe and orderly environment inside the classroom where students feel comfortable and can actively participate in activities. Computers and other technological solutions should be available according to the needs of the students. These may include special keyboards, mouse alternatives, or voice-based input devices. There should be a dedicated space or centre to organize and distribute resources and also to store the supporting equipment provided by specialists. The space inside the classroom should be



flexible so that it can be modified to suit different types of activities and instruction for students. Ensure availability of a variety of materials and resources that can meet the diverse needs and learning styles of students.

(VI) Making the Classroom Inclusive:

One of the most important ways to ensure the success of an inclusive classroom is to get to know the students and build a positive relationship with each child. This can be in the form of informal surveys to find out how students learn best, observation of classroom interactions or one-on-one conversations to find out the needs of students. As teachers, one must accept the fact that every child can learn and have high expectations from all. Children can be grouped by ability so that students of similar ability have the opportunity to progress at their own pace, or divided into mixed ability groups so that students can learn from each other. It is a fact that students learn more in a lower teacher-to-student ratio. When teachers team-teach or allow assistants to work with smaller groups, the group size is reduced and everyone benefits. All students in the classroom must understand and accept that mistakes are for learning and will be tolerated as long as the child attempts to learn from the mistake. Inclusive learning classrooms provide support for the individual learning needs of students. When teachers recognize that all students are capable of learning and understand the importance of providing quality education to all learners, they are able to implement systems that help each child achieve academic success.

(VII) Changes in classroom teaching strategies:

It is important to know and follow the Individual Education Plan of children with disabilities to understand their specific needs. While keeping students in mainstream education, they should be allowed to work on the same content as classmates. This includes tutoring, group work, project-based learning and cooperative learning etc. Visual aids, audio recorders, computers and other technological tools should be used for students. Hearing aids should also be provided for children with hearing impairments. Clear and consistent expectations should be set and demonstrated right from the beginning about attendance, behavior and timelines in class. It is important to use positive reinforcement to encourage students to invest in the learning process and stay engaged in their studies. It is important to create a welcoming and respectful environment where differences are accepted. Peer engagement programs and discussions on diversity can help in social inclusion. Ensuring that classrooms and school buildings are physically accessible to students; Encouraging disabled and non-disabled students to work together helps build friendships and confidence. Teachers should be encouraged to receive advanced training to implement inclusive teaching strategies and the latest educational theories. Students should be connected to external knowledge sources such as visits to museums or other cultural sites. It would be convenient to work closely with school counselors, specialists, and medical professionals to understand the needs of children with disabilities and provide them with the necessary support.

(VIII) Variety in Assessment Methods:

It is important to diversify assessment methods in an inclusive classroom. Students should be allowed to answer verbally, through diagrams, or in bullet points to express their understanding based on their linguistic abilities. They should be provided with multiple-choice question options to show understanding of the concept without having to write the answer themselves. Assessment should include authentic tasks applicable to real-world scenarios so that students can apply their learning in real-life situations. Students should be given extra time in the test or the test should be conducted in a quiet and orderly environment. They should be allowed to use assistive devices such as calculators, logs, or vocabulary lists. Make the questions clear and easy to understand, provide hints or illustrations, and if necessary read them out or allow for recording of verbal responses. Provide students with opportunities to practice the assessment tasks before the final assessment. Provide them with clear and useful feedback based on the assessment results so that they can understand their progress. Tell them clearly how the assessment will be conducted and what they are learning that will be assessed, which will help them understand the results.

2. CONCLUSION:

An inclusive school is a school that welcomes and educates every child, whether disabled or non-disabled, regardless of their needs, abilities or background. Here all students have the opportunity to learn and reach their full potential in the same classroom and the same school. Inclusive schools require an inclusive learning environment. Inclusive learning environment is being recognized across the world not only as a basic human right but also as a game changer for education. This means that all children have the right to quality education and inclusive education meets their individual needs. Therefore, there is a need to create a better teaching-learning environment for children with disabilities in the inclusive school system. There are many areas in an inclusive school that can be improved to improve the teaching-learning environment. These areas include the physical environment of the school, relationships between staff and students, technical support for staff and students, availability of appropriate human resources, making the



Classroom Inclusive, appropriate classroom management, changes in classroom teaching strategies, variations in assessment methods, etc.

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