



**UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION
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1. Title of the Project : **PSYCHO SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

1. To study the socio-demographic characteristics of the differently abled children.
2. To analyze the disability status, rehabilitative measures, nature of support services received by children with special needs, intervention facilitated by the schools for enriching the learning environment for children with special needs and positive influence of inclusive education on them.
3. To assess the psycho-social support given by the school for the well-being of the children with special needs.

4. To portray the level of classroom climate, Study habit, adjustment problems, achievement motivation and attitude towards inclusive education among the children with special needs.
5. To conduct case studies of children with special needs and their parents and school teachers (both special and general educators) for understanding their problems encountered during the implementation of inclusive education.
6. To suggests the suitable measures for effective implementation of inclusive education.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

As education enters the new millennium, the increasing complexity of societal factors such as technological innovations and socio-cultural diversity requires ongoing research to determine the most effective educational contexts and strategies for all students. Evidence continues to mount in support of the positive effects of inclusive education for students both with and without disabilities. Social benefits of inclusion for students with developmental disabilities have been found to include the development of improved communication skills, friendship networks, and parent and community attitudes. At the same time, typical students have been shown to benefit from opportunities to interact with students with developmental disabilities. Thus, it seems clear from the research to date that inclusive educational practices provide a context within which the social-emotional development of students in elementary school classrooms is likely to be enhanced.

The present study emphasized that an implementation of the collaborative teaching model brought about various social benefits for groups of students with special needs, they experienced improvement in academic performance, psychological development and social skills. A majority of the students experienced an increase in self-concept related to their social abilities and accomplishments. The teachers who participated in the case study noticed that the children with special needs experienced an increase in positive

attitude towards themselves and others, a higher degree of motivation and an ability to assess more objectively their skills and weaknesses. The rate of interaction with other students with special needs was a significant predictor of students' educational achievement and thus, it minimizes negative stereotypes on special needs students. This is an important finding since it establishes a clear relationship between social interactions with typical peers and the achievement of Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals by students with special needs. In the present study the interaction and relationship between children with special educational needs and normal peers was high. The teachers had more positive attitude towards inclusion of students with special needs in the general classroom, perceived that they are more capable of offering instruction to them, felt resources and support needed were available, had a greater sense of efficacy and worked more collaboratively in providing assistance to students with special needs. One-third of the teachers expressed a negative attitude towards due to workload, heavy individual differences, class size, lack of support from the school administration and lack of resources. Indeed, teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education affect the process and the outcome of inclusion to a great extent.

The researcher found out from the collected data that school environment is not favourable to children with special educational needs, because lack of ramp and other facilities. Most school systems are confronting two types of barriers, external and internal. Most of the students with special needs experienced that several advantages they received after joining in inclusive school such as enhancing self-confidence, motivation to compete with other normal children, good and affectionate peer support--all these reduce the inferiority complex among the differently abled children. Half of the students with special education needs had a positive perception of classroom climate, improvement in their study habit, adjustments in society and family and they were motivated in academic achievement, social self-concept and physical self-concept. A majority of the students with special needs assessed that they have

had a positive attitude towards inclusive education and a few students had a negative attitude due to lack of teachers' individual attention, fear about teachers approach in the classroom, typical peer imitation, lack of cooperation and segregation in the classroom.

A sizeable percentage of the teachers hold a positive attitude towards inclusion but a few teachers had a negative attitude. Some students with special needs were more acceptable to others. Specifically, the teachers were less willing to educate students with hearing impairments, communication disorder, behavioural disorders, intellectual deficiency and severely differently abled children in the mainstream classroom. Most of them opined that students with special needs were disruptive to other students in the class. A majority of the teachers who participated in the case studies pointed out the need for reduced class size, more resources and support services. Since most teachers did not receive any special education training in their teachers' training course, they feel that they are not qualified to carry through with the inclusion process.

Inferences drawn from questionnaires and interviews with teachers indicated that students with special educational needs pose a challenge to teachers. These challenges require changes in thinking and in the practices in the relevant institutions so that they can provide sufficient resources and conditions for successful implementation of inclusive education policies. A majority of the parents who participated in the case studies stated that an inclusive education provides opportunity for children with special needs to be taught in a regular classroom with their normal counterparts. This approach has social advantage and parents have expressed satisfaction with the progress of their children in this direction.

The majority of the students had a positive attitude towards inclusive education. They observed that improvement in academic performance, improvement in self-confidence, improvement in becoming self-reliant, doing

household chores and overcoming fear as well as an improvement in mobility. More than half of the students with special educational needs too expressed inclusive classroom would be able to provide good learning environment, enhance the study habit, improve the achievement motivation and self-concept and develop the adjustment in terms of academic, social and educational level. The children with special educational needs also feel that collaborative teaching model would lead to improvement in academic, psychological and social benefits. Interaction with six eminent school teachers and six children with special needs indicate that the greatest barriers to the successful implementation of inclusion are: (i) the structural limitations of primary school schedules and the intensive instruction required at this level to address exceptional students' deficiencies (ii) teachers negative perception and attitudes (iii) students' negative attitudes (iv) low level of teachers' competency (v) limited planning time (vi) existing rules and regulations and (vii) insufficient institutional support and resources.

The principal investigator insists that knowledge of strategies for classroom management is needed, if inclusion is to be implemented successively. In short, effective management systems that allow students to work independently while teachers try to meet the needs of smaller groups are required. Teachers who are involved in guidance and counselling work in schools may already possess some of the interpersonal helping skills and positive attitude. The guidance personnel, such as school social workers and school psychologists should provide specific support services to students with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The researcher also recommends the use of flexible groupings, co-operative learning and peer tutoring, choice-making opportunities, multi-modality instruction and flexible response activities, curriculum/performance based assessment and collaborative teaching.

It was observed from the case studies that all six students who participated in the case studies perceived that they had more academic skills such as reading skill, listening skill, concentration and text anxiety management. A majority (Five out of six children with special needs) who participated in the case studies expressed that this inclusive classrooms maximize the opportunity for them to form friendships with students without disabilities. All the students' mothers (Six students' mothers) who participated in the case studies indicated a need for curriculum modification as per the need of children with special needs. They expressed the need to give appropriate pedagogy for children with special needs. All the parents felt that teachers should prepare appropriate teaching aids. A positive school ethos has contributed significantly to the success of inclusion programs. Five out of six students indicated that inclusive school was more appropriate for their improvement in academic, psychological and social fields. In five out of six cases the personality of the student was seen as being the primary reason for the successful implementation of inclusion at the school. Personality traits such as determination, motivation, curiosity, and a positive attitude towards learning were all listed as contributing to the success of the students. A majority of the teachers (four out of six) perceived a variety of issues relating to inclusion. In particular, it was apparent both from individual case studies and classroom observations that teachers believed they often lack the skills to include a child with a disability into a regular class. They felt the barriers to be lack of training, personnel and administrative support and the uncertainty of academic and social gains through adopting such model. Almost all the teachers who were involved in case studies expressed the opinion that the number of special education teachers was not enough. Many school districts find it very difficult to fill-up posts that require special education qualifications. It is a problem felt by all the six teachers. All the six mainstream teachers indicated that they need support from their administrators and parents. Most of these teachers also indicated they needed more resources such as instructional material and equipment appropriate for students' level and

special needs. They also indicate that they would like to receive training in special education, particularly in terms of learning about the characteristics of students with special needs, inclusion and the individualized education program.

The findings of the study suggest that if inclusion is to be effective, teachers have to be receptive to the principal and demands of inclusion. The teachers need to use a variety of instructional approaches towards meeting individual student needs and learning styles. It is very important to focus on teachers' attitudes in order to implement reform recommendations. It is more important however to examine reasons and factors behind such attitudes if we wish to change them. Lastly, it is not advisable for school systems to view mainstream classrooms as the least restrictive environments for all students. Rather inclusion should be based on each student's individual needs and adequate in-service training designed to prepare teachers for working with students with special need. Addressing the areas of needs identified in this study would help mainstream teachers accept and implement inclusive programme successfully.

In Summary, Inclusive education provides opportunity for children with special needs to be taught in a regular classroom with their normal counterparts. This approach has social advantage and students with special needs have experienced satisfaction with the approaches of teachers and typical peer in the inclusive classroom. A number of factors such as poor planning, traditional practices and beliefs, attitudes of teachers, inflexible curriculum, lack of teaching and learning aids, parents' attitude towards school, administrators, and students affect the implementation of inclusive education. If we are to make progress in inclusive education, and attain the development goals for children with special needs, the issues raised and addressed in the above must be revisited. These are: (i) positive teachers' attitude towards inclusive education (ii) children's need-based flexible

curriculum (iii) strengthening village education committee (parents, local leader and teachers) and (iv) developing appropriate teaching materials. The outcome of the collaborative teaching model is in line with the outcome of conceptual collaborative teaching model, so that this research model helps to achieve social advantage, enhance teachers' skills and knowledge and able to provide Education for All.