Sociology of Special Education: Teacher's Support and Student's Performance

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Abstract :-The present article focuses on the societal requirementsfor the learners with disabilities in inclusive schoolswhich may be socio-psychological and pedagogical practices. The process of inclusion starts with the assessment of attitudinal barrier of the learner by teachers/classmates in school/classroom settings demandsspecial and unique strategies, care and support for inclusion.To examine the phenomena of teacher's support and student's performance, five schools offering special education in Hyderabad and Secunderabad twin cities were taken for this study and 300 samples were collected by following snow-ball sampling method. The inventory related to views, attitudes,teachers' supportive mechanism and performance of childrenhas been taken into the consideration to generalize the observations which have been persisting in special education schools.

The major findings are inclusive schools recognize and respond to diverse needs of their students, accommodating the studentsin different styles and rates of learning by ensuring quality through offering appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies and inviting participation of parents. There should be a continuum of support from teachers as well as management to match the curriculum of special students isperceived in every school. It is believed that educating a differently-abled child in general school is certainly tough, hence, the responsibilities of a teacher include those other than instructional like conducting assessments and coordinating with parents, management and colleagues. They also need to modify their lessons to suit each disabled learner by providing individualized education programmes within the class.

Keywords: *Special Education, Disability Studies, Teacher Support, Students Performance, Special Teacher, Sociology of Education*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential human virtue, a necessity of society, basis of good life and sign of freedom[1] so that everyone want to see children going towards success which is only possible through the good and proper education. Every parent tells their kids from childhood about the importance of education in the life and all the advantages of education to make their mind towards better study in the future[2]. Education is not only confined to personal development but core factor for equality and empowerment of any a given society[3]. Though the right to education and equality of educational opportunities are guaranteed by the Constitution of India, it is disturbing fact that more than half of the population of children and youth with disabilities are denied the rights and do not receive adequate schooling in anappropriate environment[4]. Most of these out of school children with disabilities are those who were refused admission in the neighbourhood school where all other children of their village were going[5]. Usually, the major reasons for not giving admission to these children in mainstream schools are that "we do not have enough resources for these children" or "they should be going to only special schools specially made for these typesof children"[6]. The message from the school system is loud and clear. The society assumes that the future of children with disabilities is worth less than that of other children. Besides, many parents of children with disabilities, not being aware of the developments in this field, thereby losing hope for the future of their children[7]. They prefer to sit back and accept their fate without pushing the matters any further[8]. We all know that receiving good education gives way to opportunities to achieve. While education is important for all, for the disabled getting a good education can at-least be a matter of survival.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Russell (1987) studied the relationship between characteristics of special teachers such as age, sex, and grade level taught and predictive of burnout. It is evidenced that the stress-moderating role of social support was also found. Teachers who reported that they had supportive supervisors and indicated that they received positive feedback concerning their skills and abilities from others were less vulnerable to burnout. It is discussed the implications of these findings for programs aimed at preventing teacher burnout[9].To improve educational services to students with disabilities, Buell et al (1999) highlights perceptions of ability to positively affect students, understanding of inclusion, self-efficacy in serving students in inclusive settings, the need for in-

service training in various areas, and the availability of supports to promote inclusion were examined for both special and general education teachers[10].Bonnie et al (1991)explored why some special education teachers choose to stay in teaching, but leave their special education assignments. It also identified deterrents and potential incentives that might lead former special educators to reconsider teaching positions in special education and deduced that teachers transfer from special to general education because of administrative factors and the stress involved in working with special education students[11].

The study of Singh (1996)collected data regarding theplace of working indicated that the teachers who remained in place experienced significantly less stress, and a better working environment than those teachers who left[12]. Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) examined several groups of teachers on poor working climate in special education, lack of support from administrators, poor job preparation, large caseloads, and low salary as factors that contributed to stress and attrition. They found that those who remained in special education felt better about their job preparation and high satisfaction[13].A survey was carried by Elias Avramidis (2000)on attitudes of mainstream teachers towards the inclusion of children with special needs in the ordinary school revealed that teachers who have been implementing inclusive programmes, and therefore have active experience of inclusion, and possess more positive attitudes. The training interventions at both pre-service and post-service levels have apervading impact in the development of teachers'support for students'inclusion[14]. Bonnie S. Billingsley (2004) conducted a collateral study pertains to thelack of qualified special education teachers threatens the quality of education that students with disabilities receive. It is found that attrition plays a part in the teacher shortage problem and efforts to improve retention must be informed by an understanding of the factors that contribute to attrition.Soodak&Podell (1993) asked thespecial teachersto judge the students who are having a learning and/or behavior problems and special educators were most likely to agree with regular class placement when they were high in both dimensions of efficacy. Regular educators higher in personal efficacy were more likely to agree with regular education placement than those with lower personal efficacy. The students with combined learning and behavior problems were found to be the most susceptible to referral with regard to teachers' sense of efficacy underlies their placement decisions

A plethora of research studies has determined that burnout among special education teachers is higher than for teachers in general education (Boe et al - 1997 Boe, Bobbit & Cook - 1997[15], Menlove, R., et al-2004[16], Payne, R.-2005[17], Liu, X. S.-2007[18]). Further, numerous studies using a variety of rigorous study designs, have delineated specific factors that may lead to burnout. These factors seem to include increasing paperwork loads, stress associated with the job requirements, a lack of planning time, lack of support from administrators, lack of proper staff development training, as well as the type of disabilities teachers deal with in the classroom. Both large-scale surveys of general and special education teachers who had left the classroom, indicate the same general causal factors related to burnout in special education.

III. MAGNITUDE OF THE STUDY:

The special schools are generally organized according to different disability categories. The schools for children with visual impairments, for the intellectually challenged and for those with hearing impairments do have major disadvantages as it requires separate education in separate environment, therefore, the children may find it hard to readjust to their families, peers and communities and children usually have to leave their families and communities to stay in a residential setting because these schools are usually not available in their immediate environment. These special schools however, can play an active role in providing resource support for the mainstream schools by giving their specialized services. Also since the children are taught by a specialist having expertise on specific impairments, their needs may be understood better and these children may grow up with their disabled peers and develop a common culture.In spite of the benefits of inclusive education, if a child with disabilities is not getting the required resource support or the teacher pupil ratio is so high that the teacher is unable to provide individual attention to disabled children in the mainstream school, thespecial school remains a viable option.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The prime objective of this study is to understand the role and enhancing services of the teachers who are teaching the children with disabilities in Hyderabad and Secunderabad twin cities. The study also assesses the performance of students in personal management, household management, communication, education, leisure activities, orientation and movement in the indoor environment, and use of low vision devices and training techniques.

V. METHODS AND MATERIALS:

Hyderabad is a city of administration for the past ten centuries, thereby, several industries and educational institutions were set up in and around of the city. In the quest fordevelopment of special education, National Institute of Mentally Handicap was established in 1984. This influenceda few individuals to start severalnew special educational schools. To realize objectives,the study was carried out in 5 Government, NGO

attached and Private special education schools located in Hyderabad-Secunderabadtwin cities. They areThakur Hariprasad Institute for Mentally Retarded, National Institute of Hearing Handicapped (NIHH), Swekar and Upkar Institute for Mentally Retarded, Devnar School for the Blind and Andhra Mahila Sabha (AMS). Since, there is no definite universe is available, the present study has followed snow-ball sampling method to draw the samples. 300 special teachers who have trained from the above said five schools were considered as the samples for this study. The study adopted mixed-questionnaire, in-depth interview and case study methods for the collection of primary data. The questionnaire consists of four parts. Part-A consisted of several items on the socio-economic, cultural and educational conditions of the teachers. Part-B deals with the items which assess the attitude and perception of teachers towards inclusive education and towards disabled children. Part-C emphasized that how teachers perceive the role of parents of disabled children. Part-D consisted of several items to assess how teachers perceive the relationship of classmates of disabled children and Part-D also consisted of the assessment perception of the teacherswith regard to the role of co-curricular and vocational activities in inclusive education used for personality development of thedisabled child. The data has been analyzed through simple tabulation and cross- tabulation and the statistic techniques like frequencies, measures of central tendency, t-tests and F-test were used in this study.

VI.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that a substantial number of special teachers i.e. 69% are female and the rest of the respondents i.e. 31% are male.The highest number of respondents i.e. 129 (43%) are in the age group of 34 - 41 years. The second most number of respondents i.e. 63 (21%) are in the age group of 26 - 33 years. Among remaining respondents, almost all an equal number respondents i.e. 55 (18.33%) and 53 (17.66%) are in the age group of 18 – 25 and 42 and above respectively. The highest number of respondents i.e. 259 (86.3%) are marriedwhile 15 (5%) are separated from their family-knit but yet to take divorce. There are 12 (4%) of respondents hadlegally taken the divorce. Interestingly, the data reveals that just 6 (2%) of the special education teachers are never married. Further, its near number of respondents i.e. 8 (2.6%) are widowed/er. The social status of the special teachers reveals that a viable number of respondents i.e. 125 (41.6%) belong to O.C. (other caste) community and one third of them i.e. 100 (33.33%) belong to Backward Classes. As many of the respondents i.e. 61 (20.3%) belong to the Schedule Castes while 14 (4.6%) are represented Schedule Tribes. The data of religion affiliation shows that a majority number of respondents i.e. 213 (71%) are Hindus. Interestingly, there are 22 (6.6%) respondents who hail from Christianity and a considerable number of respondents i.e. 15 (5%) are from Islam and a few are associated with other religions. Education status of the teachers denotes that the majority number of respondents i.e. 243 (81%) have studied up to B.Ed. with graduation. The next set of respondents i.e. 30 (10%) have studied B.Ed. with Post Graduation in any subject. Among the remaining, there are an equal number of respondents i.e. 9 (3%) studied M.Ed. and M.Ed. with any Post Graduation respectively. And 6 (2%) of them studied diploma in education and only a few 3 (1%) finished Master of Philosophy in Education (M.Phil.).

The data pertains to head of the family and family occupation other than thehead of thefamily show that majority number of respondents i.e. 167 (55.6%) belong to not applicable (N/A) category which means the special education teachers are themselves the head of the family. In other words, such families did not possess any extra income earned members in their families. As many as the respondents i.e. 44 (14.6%) involve in petty business activities and a significant number of respondents i.e. 37 (12.3%) are in theservices sector. There are 27 (9%) are performing business or trade activities and a considerable number of respondents i.e. 20 (6.6%) are engaging in the manual labour activities. Only 5 (1.6%) are inanother type of occupational category.

Income-wise data shows that the highest number of respondents i.e. 226 (75.3%) are earning Rs. 5,001 – 8,500 income per month. As many as the respondents i.e. 41 (13.6%) are gaining Rs. 3,500 – 5,000. A considerable number of respondents i.e. 23 (7.6%) are lied in theincome level of 8,500 to 10,000 rupees. Only 10 (3.3%) are having amonthly salary more than Rs.10000/- per month.

The data pertains to own properties shows that just above half of the respondents i.e. 159 (53%) possess houses or house site on their own and 67 (22.3%) of them who possess two or four wheeler vehicles. Among the remaining, a viable number of respondents i.e. 35 (11.6%) are not having any property on their own. A significant number of respondents i.e. 24 (8%) have lands and an insignificant number of the respondents i.e. 15 (5%) consist of other properties.

The data about thetype of family shows that the highest number of respondents i.e. 276 (92%) live in nuclear families while 21 (7%) are sharing acommon roof and food. Only 3 (1%) are in extended families. The data of own house possession shows that just above half of the respondents i.e. 159 (53%) consist of houses on their own while the rest i.e. 141 (47%) do not possess, therefore, live in rent houses. The data regarding typology of living house reveals that a subtaintial number of respondents i.e. 234 (78%) live in Reinforced Contrite Cement (R.C.C.) houses whereas 42 (14%) dwell in multi-stored houses. 17 (5.6%) respondents who

reside in duplex houses and only one respondent is living in thetiled house. On the whole, 6 (2%) are staying underanother type of houses.

The data of rent house elicited that just below 2/3rd of the respondents i.e. 64 (46%) are paying Rs. 4001 – 5000 as the monthly rent. As similar, just above 1/3rd of them i.e. 51 (36%) are paying rent ranging from Rs. 3001 to 4000. A perusal number of them i.e. 16 (11%) are spending Rs. 5001 to 6000 and almost an equal number of respondents i.e. 6 (4%) and 4 (3%) spend Rs. below 3000 and above 6000 respectively.

The data regarding the nature of employment of special teachers concerned that just above of 3/4th respondents i.e. 228 (76%) are working as the contractual employees whereas 72 (24%) are permanent employers. Among the permanent teachers, 22 (30.5%) are lied in the 2 – 4 years of experience group and further, 18 (25%) possessing 6 and more years of experience. As many as respondents i.e. 12 (16.6%) are working there from 4 to 6 years and an equal number of respondents i.e. 10 (13.8%) have been there for two years.

Posting place-wise data describes that majority number of the respondents i.e. 261 (87%) were directly posted and remaining 39 (13%) were come to present working place on transfer or by deputation. The data shows that a substantial number of respondents i.e. 225 (75%) previously worked in the urban areas and a significant number of respondents i.e. 68 (23%) worked in the sub-urban areas. On the whole, the 2 percent of them worked in the rural areas.

The data between learning differences shows that a substantial number of respondents i.e. 223 (74.3%) have noticed the differences between the learning difference and impairment or health condition. There are ¼ of them i.e. 77 (25.6%) have stated that they did not find any learning differences. Usually, the advance teaching methods, appropriate tools and techniques utilization held in the class room teaching during the rehabilitation process. The technology advancement has insisted the teachers to adopt the new methodologies to serve the mentally challenged students and physically impaired students. The difference may exist by not only technological advancement and by the funds allocation of the Governments. Therefore, it may be inferred that technological advancement has stimulated the infrastructure of schools and colleges, the impressed teachers to avail the better and advanced rehabilitation education. The researches which were held in this field are also brining tremendous changes in learning and teaching methods, however, those are contributing a lot for theamelioration of special education.

The data of class room problems shows that majority number of respondents i.e. 179 (59.6%) have not faced any trouble in the class room whereas 121 (40.3%) replied negatively. Further data explains that 1/3rd of respondents i.e. 100 (33.3%) have the problems which are infrastructural while 78 (26%) and 66 (22%) have reported economical and temporal problems. On the whole, a significant number of respondents i.e. 44 (14.6%) have been facing curriculum problems and only 12 (4%) confined with another type of problems. Special education institutions are not having basic amenities and the curricular infrastructure is extremely rare, it always tries to constrain them to teach the students and owing to lack of infrastructure, even students are not learning and accessing the appropriate methods and tools which are widely used in the special education. For instance, the instruments of hearing impairment are most useful to teach the deaf students, without such instruments, a special teacher cannot teach them with effectively. If, such instruments are not availed by them result in adeficiency of training. This exists due to the lack of space for special schools and insufficiency of resources.

The analysis reveals that teachers do not professionally prepared to work with students to cater the challenging needs (Mean = 5.17) and that dramatic steps were required to reduce their workload in inclusive settings and that they were faced with additional work with inclusion (Mean = 4.61). Teachers do not feel that they have time to attend to activities around inclusion and that they perceive a need to significantly alter their established teaching routines to accommodate inclusion (Mean = 4.89). Finally, teachers are not confident in their abilities cope with the students in terms of teaching skills. They do not feel that they can adequately make the required program and curriculum adaptations for students with special learning needs (Mean = 4.57). The mean scores of these four central issues indicate a strong overall negative perception of the concept of inclusion. This strong negative perception may be the result of not including special education professionals or administrators in the sample as there is consistent evidence that both groups have more positive attitudes about inclusion.

Although the mean scores for each of the four issues were slightly different, the data revealed very similar overall negative trends of several schools' data with regard to teachers' perceptions of inclusion. The teachers do not feel professionally prepared (Mean = 5.0), they find inclusion to be extra work (Mean = 4.5), they do not have time for extra activities or for altering their routines as required by inclusion (Mean = 4.5), and they are not confident in their teaching skills or their program and curriculum adaptation skills (Mean = 4.2).

The results of all of the above are consistent with the results reported by Bunch&Valeo (2004)[19] who stated that, in general, regular classroom teachers were considered to be insufficiently prepared for teaching in an inclusive setting and noted that special teachers nevercalled for an emphasis on professional development in any certain manner. The results are also consistent with those of Bunch et al which indicates that educators have strong concerns about the high expectations and workloads placed on regular classroom teachers and the

effect of inclusion upon them. Similarly, Scruggs &Mastropieri(2007)[20]indicated that 66 (75%) of teachers believed that they did not have the sufficient time, skills, training or resources necessary for inclusion. Besides, it was suggested that the lack of improvement in perceptions of teacher preparedness for mainstreaming/inclusion over time suggests that teacher education programs may be no more effective at preparing teachers for mainstreaming/inclusion.

VII.   TEACHERS' POSITIVE ATTITUDES:

The successful transformation for inclusive schooling depends upon positive attitudes of the teachers toward students with special learning needs and many studies have clearly illustrated that thedevelopment of positive attitude is possible when thoughtful guidance and direction to be provided by teachers in inclusive settings (Johnson-1984[21], Karagiannis& Cartwright-1990[22]; Karagiannis, Stainback&Stainback, 1996[23]). Researches also indicate that positive attitudes towards inclusion which only inclines to increase the further an individual for the actual implementation of inclusive practices (Barngrover-1971[24], Horne-1983[25], Odom& Diamond-1998[26]) and that secondary teachers are less positive about inclusion than elementary teachers (Gickling& Theobald -1975[27]; Feden&Clabaugh -1986[28], Slavin et al - 1989[29]).

Despite the primary findings of this study,the classroom teachers have mostly negative perceptions of inclusion, the question-by-question analysis of the parameters of four central issues revealed that there was inconsistent positive evidence that could maintain a positive learning environment. They believed that students would blend smoothly into classroom dynamics, and that perceive overall teaching efforts which would have several positive effects but this grouping was not established as far.

Again, these positive attitudes are similar to those reported by Bunch, Lupart& Brown (1997)[30] who indicated that the majority of teachers felt that they could work inclusively, that they were responsible for included students and considered inclusion to be more positive as educational practice. Bunch et al also reported that administrators were more positive in their attitudes toward inclusion than regular classroom teachers and elementary teachers were more positively disposed of than secondary teachers. In additionally, Mastropieri&Scruggs (1996)[31]found that two thirds of the teachers supported the concept of mainstreaming/inclusion and a majority were willing to include students with disabilities in their classes.

This study also observed insignificant differences between elementary and secondary teachers' perceptions of inclusion across the four central issues. This finding is not consistent with the literature; however, the fact that teachers who previously held or currently held special education positions were excluded from the sample may have affected this finding as there are more special education teaching positions at the elementary and secondary levels in Hyderabad twin cities.The test of analysis variance (ANOVA) regarding the notions of special teachers on the creation of classroom problems by the students with respect to student ages. The data shows that F value is 0.891 at the significance (p) level of 0.570, which is greater than the normal probability value i.e. 0.05 thus, it is assumed that'age of students having a significant impact in creating the classroom problems'. This may due to the socialization process through the rehabilitation counseling that enculturize the students to learn new things and make them obey the rules and regulationslied for accommodation process which is being facilitatedby neighbours, peer group, and parent more specifically.

The data pertains to the reactions of special education teachers conveys the students do not understand the classes. 204 (68%) stated that they will teach again and again the lesson. Among the remaining, almost an equal number of respondents i.e. 45 (15%) and 43 (14.3%) go to next chapter and they will not concern about the lesson respectively. Only 8 were taking any other type of activities. The special education teachers have the preconceptions that they will again teach the lesson which is not usually understood by the students. Generally, the role of theteacher is to make understand the lessons and to inculcate the institutionalized values into the personality of students, for that teacher intended torepeat the understand lessons.

VIII.   CONCLUSION

The findings concerning the positive aspects of special classes, especially the personality, roles and behavior of a special teacher are presented in this study. For instance, it is unknown exactly how the special teachers behave in the classroom situation and how she/he builds a personal relationship with his/her pupils. These are questions, which needed more ethnographic fieldwork and classroom observation. Here it is coming back to the tradition of the British micro-sociologist (Woods-1984[32]& 2011[33]) and social psychologist (Marsh, Rosser & Harré-1978[34]. Such inquiries might produce more details about howthe most skillful special educators are able to arrange the kind of instructions which are not possible for some other teachers. This could also be valuable information in training our general education teachers to confront the special needs in inclusive settings. The special educator plays a key role in providing special education to the children with special needs. She/he coordinates the whole intervention programmes of achild, which involves parents and other multidisciplinary team members.Special education being a multidisciplinary area, it involves theactive

interaction of personnel from different sectors like medicine, education, psychology and sociology. The literature in different sectors uses terminology with their respective discipline bases.

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible regardless of any difficulties or differences that they may have. The inclusive school may recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies resource use and partnership with committees. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum special needs encountered in every school. Most people feel that educating a differently-abled child in general school is inclusion but it can be treated as total inclusion only when general classroom teachers take most of the responsibilities for the education of these children. If the differently-abled child's needs are taken care of only by a special teacher in a general classroom, it is not total inclusion.

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