



Presence of Children with Disabilities in Mainstream Classroom add to the Existing Workload of Regular Teachers—Myth or Real

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Abstract: *Presence of children with disabilities in mainstream classroom add to the existing workload of regular teachers—Myth or Real.*

Presence of Children with Disabilities (CwD) in the inclusive education settings is often comprehended as addition to their existing roles and responsibilities, by regular teachers. The regular teachers are one of those key stakeholders, whose contribution is essential for the success of inclusion in education. If given a chance the regular teachers often come out with a long list of difficulties they have to face while teaching. These difficulties may or may not have any relation with the presence of children with disabilities.

The present paper attempts to study how the presence of children with disabilities in mainstream classroom, will add to the identified list of difficulties faced during teaching learning by regular teachers and despite this list the opinion of regular teachers towards inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular classrooms, whether favorable or not favorable.

The data was collected from 160 regular teachers transacting curricular areas at different levels of schooling through researcher made survey. The data analysis revealed that teachers identified, insufficient previous knowledge, concentration abilities, attitude towards studies, behavioral issues, lack of support from parents, large classroom etc., as difficulties faced by them during teaching learning. Despite these problems majority of the responding regular teachers had favorable attitude towards presence of children with disabilities in the regular classroom. The reasons for favorable attitude varied from being helpful in overall growth of children with disabilities to building confidence and developing sense of belongingness.

(Key Words: *regular teachers, inclusive education, children with disabilities, regular teachers' role in inclusive classrooms)*

1. INTRODUCTION

December 2016, India celebrated the passing of Right of Persons With Disabilities (RPWD) Act. The Act supports the right of children with disabilities for education and suggests

measures to promote and facilitate inclusive education. As the name suggests and as also defined in the RPWD Act 2016, inclusive education is a system of education wherein students with and without disabilities study together, with appropriate support and flexibilities provided by the system for addressing the diverse educational needs of children with disabilities.

Implementation of inclusive education, in school education, in India is in practice, in the guise of zero rejection in admission under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), special provisions for Children with Disabilities (CwD) under both the SSA and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA). Both RMSA and SSA merged under Samagra Shiksha at present.

Enrollment of CwD in the nearby mainstream schools has made education accessible. However, this access to education is restricted largely to only physical access. The access to quality education on equal basis with non-disabled peers still remained a dream, for most CwD. The reasons for this can be found in lack of appropriate teaching learning material, rigid curriculum, attitude of teachers, lack of essential support services, absence of onsite support, inadequate teacher education at both pre-service and in-service level etc (Bharti, 2016).

Savage & Erten, (2015) studied the relationship between teacher's perception of inclusion and their teaching practices and how this impacts the achievement of learning outcomes by students studying in classes 3 and 5. The findings indicated that learner outcomes are associated with teacher's effective teaching practices and associated belief's regarding inclusive education.

Regular teachers have a significant role to play in inclusive education settings (Patterson, 2005), such as work collaboratively with the resource teacher (Kittrell, 2017), monitor progress of all learners, preparing appropriate teaching learning aids etc. (Tyagi, 2016), and hence they should be made familiar with the applicable laws, principles and provisions.

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2. OBJECTIVES

The present paper attempts to study--

1. The problems (other than administrative) faced by regular teachers during teaching learning.
2. The opinion of regular teachers towards inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular classrooms, whether favorable or not favorable.
3. Modifications in the list of perceived difficulties faced by regular teachers during teaching learning due to the presence of children with disabilities in mainstream classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

This is a survey research wherein the data was collected from 160 regular teachers transacting curricular areas at different levels of schooling through researcher made survey.

4. DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS

The survey consists of only two items---mention the problems (except administrative) that you face while teaching learning and express your opinion, with justification, on making children with and without disabilities sit and study together in the same classroom. Please note that, the first item doesn't mention CwD, yet few participants mentioned CwD, while listing the problems and challenges faced during teaching learning.

Objective 1: Problems (excluding administrative) faced during teaching learning

The purpose of this item in the survey was to list the problems and challenges faced by regular teachers during teaching learning. Content sifting of the responses to this open ended question led to the generation of the following table—

TABLE 1: Response analysis to survey item 1

S. No.	Content sifting of Responses (160 participants)	Frequency
1	Large number of students in classroom	59
2	Lack of appropriate resources	29
3	Individual problems of students	29
4	Insufficient conceptual understanding/desired level of learning/varying level of learning	25

S. No.	Content sifting of Responses (160 participants)	Frequency
5	Lack of basic knowledge	25
6	Behavior problems	24
7	Irregular attendance of students in school	24
8	No cooperation to teacher from students	23
9	Lack of interest in academics	23
10	Incomplete homework and class work	18
11	lack of concentration in the class	17
12	Family and social and educational background related	15
13	Subject specific such as Mathematics/Hindi/etc	14
14	Environment related includes infrastructure	12
15	Study habits	9
16	Involvement in non-teaching learning tasks during teaching time	9
17	no detention policy	7
18	Time management	4
19	Adjustment in the school environment	4
20	Problems due to co-education/adolescence issues	4
21	No problem	3
22	Problem of teaching child with deafness-dumbness and other CwD	3

The above table converted into chart (below) gives better idea of the problems reported by the participant teachers. Large classrooms beyond the prescribed teacher pupil ratio in the right to education Act 2009, is the problem reported by majority of regular teachers. This was followed by lack of appropriate teaching learning resources, individual problems, educational backlog in the form of insufficient conceptual understanding and basic knowledge, and behavioral problems. Irregular attendance, no cooperation from students and parents, study habits, incomplete home/classwork, no interest in academics and issues related to concentration and behavior were other problems reported by teachers. Very small number of teachers mentioned that they face challenges during teaching learning due to presence of children with disabilities.

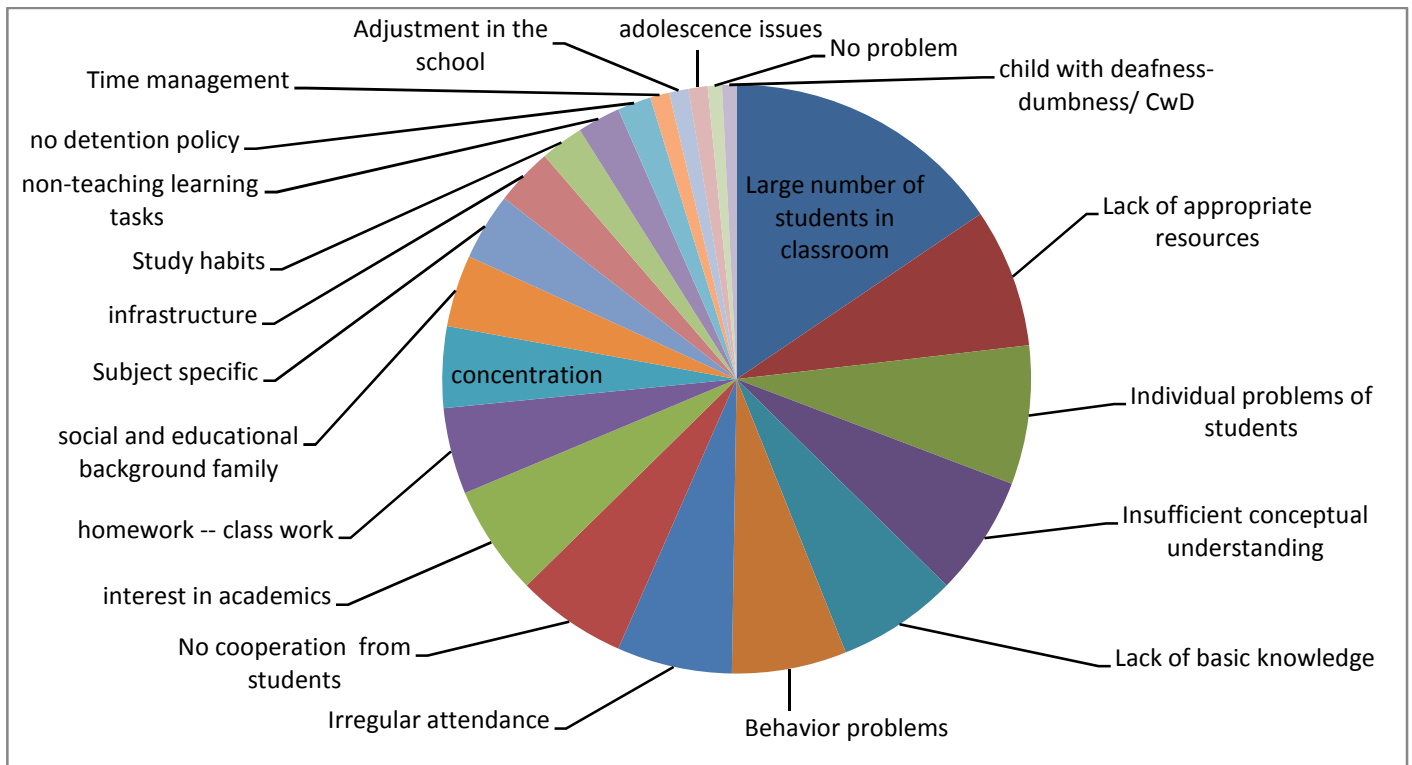


Fig. 1. Problems (non-administrative) faced by regular teachers

Objective 2: Opinion of regular teachers, regarding teaching learning of CwD in the same classroom along with children without disabilities.

Majority of the participating teachers (55 %), was found to be in favor of teaching CwD in the regular classroom along with children without disabilities. On the other hand 39 % teachers were found to be not in favor and 6 % responding teacher opined that there can't be right and wrong answer to this question, as it depends on factors like degree and nature of disability. This was indicated in the figure below.

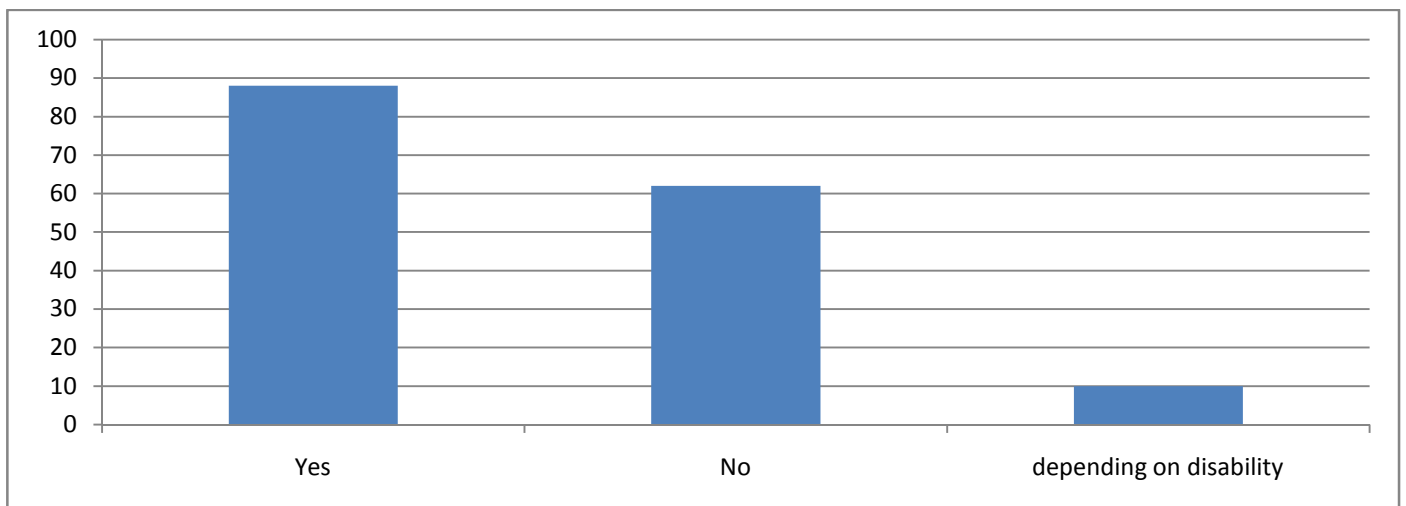


Fig. 2. Teacher's opinion about making CwD study in inclusive classrooms

It was a positive scenario, as despite listing lot of problems in the classroom the majority (55%) of the participating teachers were in favor of teaching CwD along with children without disabilities, in the same classroom. The 10 teachers who reported that it should be based on the disability have detailed that if the nature of disability is cognitive than it would be difficult to teach him/her along with peers without disabilities.

Objective 3: Modification in the list of problems (non-administrative) due to presence of CwD

Participating teachers were asked to justify their opinion on including CwD in the mainstream classrooms, which was qualitatively analyzed in the light of third objective, i.e. whether presence of CwD is adding to the existing problems (non-administrative) of regular teachers, as per their reports. It was assumed during this research that teachers expressing favorable attitude towards inclusion were doing so because they see no addition to their existing list of problems due to presence of CwD. The figure below presents the reasons cited by participating teachers for favoring inclusion.

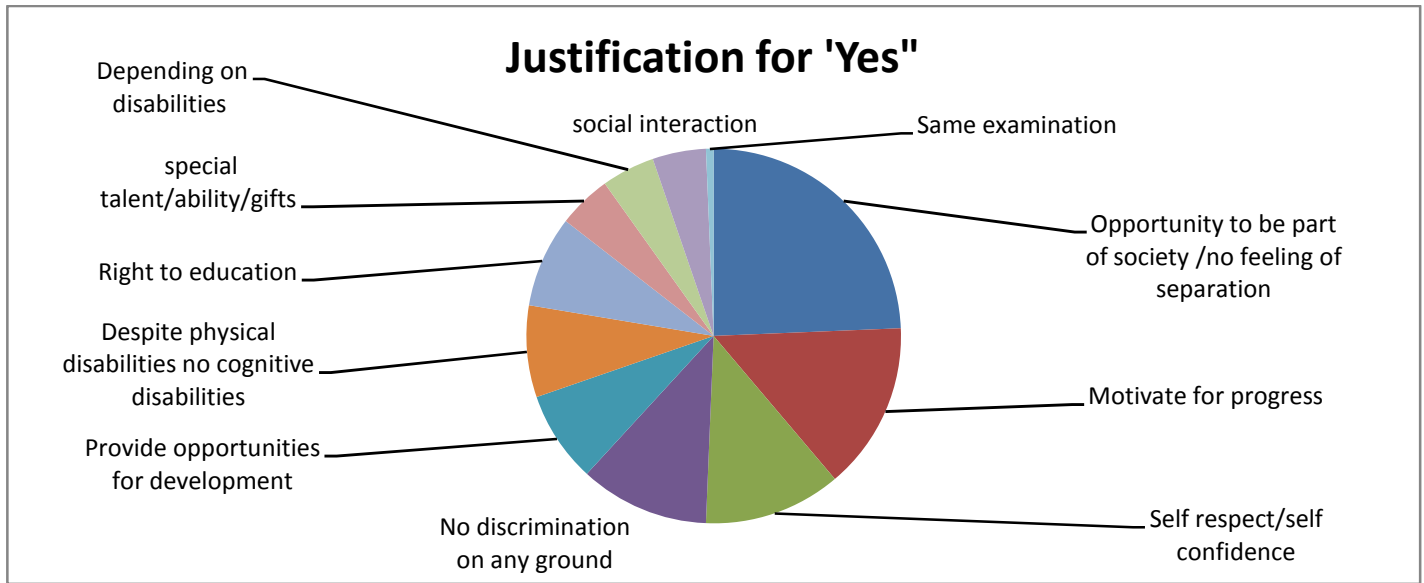


Fig. 3. Justification for favoring inclusion in education

As shown by figure above, the data analysis revealed that most of the responding teachers were in favor of inclusion as they thought this will give CwD an opportunity to be part of society, motivate them for progress and development, enhance their self-confidence, no discrimination on any grounds, right to education etc. This indicates that the thought process of responding teachers was influenced by the discourse of charity, towards persons with disabilities. The need of the hour is to accept and practice discourse of human rights which advocates equal rights for every human being, and perceive that Braille trail or sign language provisions are rights of persons with disabilities just like print or audio or stairs are for person without disabilities. In other words, it can be said that teachers were of the opinion that by supporting inclusion in education, CwD will get a chance to progress, and feel motivated to set higher goals by challenging themselves. The inclusive education settings will provide the opportunity for social interaction that will promote the feeling of acceptance and social interaction which in turn shall facilitate the dispelling of many myths reading abilities of CwD, from the minds of peers

without disabilities and vice versa. None of the responding teachers reported that the presence of CwD will add on to their existing problems, which they face during teaching learning. However, few teachers mentioned that inclusion of CwD should be dependent on the nature of their disabilities; children without cognitive and intellectual disabilities should be allowed to study in the mainstream classrooms.

The figure below, presents the justification given by teachers for responding 'No' to idea of inclusion. The teachers opinion, not in favor of inclusion of CwD, might be the outcome of their perception that presence of CwD in my classroom will add to my problems during teaching learning. This they have expressed as lack of appropriate training. The major reasons listed by responding teachers were CwD require special teachers, special methods and special curriculum, in regular class CwD may feel different/alienated/inferior, their needs may not be addressed effectively, may not get the attention and care they need and deserve and they need more time for study. Few teachers also opined that allowing them to study in

inclusive classroom would be violation of their right to be equal and equity based provisions. However, no additional

information was provided in support for this response.

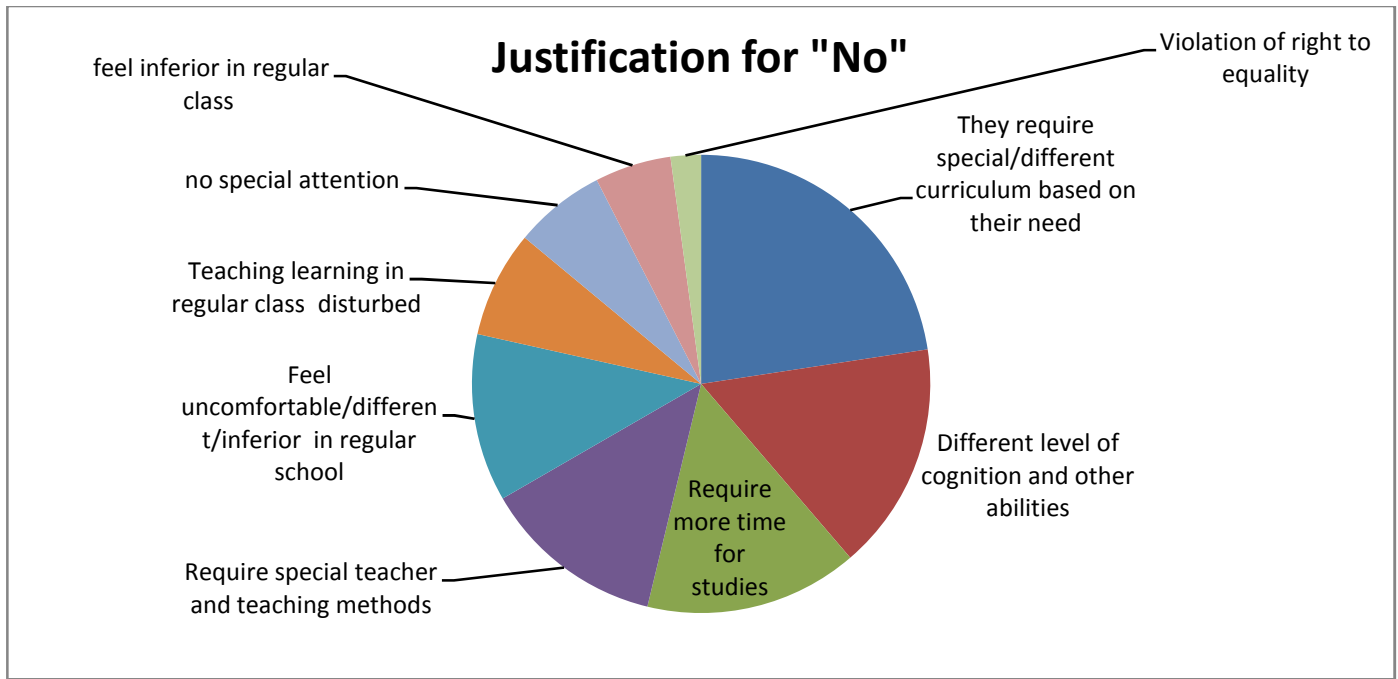


Fig. 3. Justification for not-favoring inclusion in education

Teachers opinion in favor and not in favor of including CwD in the mainstream classrooms were assumed to be related with their perception of addition or no addition to the problems faced by them during teaching learning. In other words teacher were assumed to be favoring inclusion of CwD when they feel presence of CwD may not add to their existing list of problems during teaching learning and vice versa.

5. DISCUSSION

Participant teachers responses generated, long list of problems and challenges faced by them during teaching learning in the classroom, irrespective of the presence of CwD, as shown in figure 1. Attempting to establish a relation between the problems listed and opinion about inclusion of CwD and justification mentioned for their opinion, the future of inclusion appears to be bright. The regular teachers were found to be in favor of educating the CwD, either in inclusive or special setting. The teacher in favor of special schools justified their stance by mentioning that they lack the required training to address the educational needs of CwD, which would be available to them in special schools by special teachers, amidst the presence of peers with similar conditions, which would not make them feel alien. The pre-service teacher education, lack

the necessary inputs preparing teacher trainees for working in inclusive classroom (NCERT, 2018).

The justification given by teachers in favor of inclusion doesn't make any new addition to the list of problems that teachers are already facing during teaching learning; rather the problem of slowing down the pace of teaching learning due to presence of CwD emerged from teachers not in favor of inclusion. Nishimuko, 2014, also found that CwD should receive education in regular schools and challenges such as teacher support and guidance and discriminatory attitudes of community needs to be addressed through careful planning and action.

Inclusive pedagogy practices focus on providing need based educational inputs, use of appropriately modified teaching learning resources, lot of drill and practice, eliciting cooperation from students, parents and other paraprofessionals, comprehending the causes behind the behavioral issues and much more. In an inclusive classroom these practices if implemented sensitively may end up reducing the list of problems faced by regular teachers. Evins, 2015, found that inclusion affects all students in a classroom. Students without

disabilities learn life lessons such as tolerance, brotherhood, helping each other, significance of appropriate behavior etc.

6. RESULT

Regular teachers face a lot of problems while teaching learning in classrooms. The major problems reported were large number of students in the classroom, lack of appropriate teaching learning resources, educational backlog, behavior related issues in general as well as individual, irregular attendance, no cooperation from students and parents etc. Despite the long list of problems faced by regular teachers in the classrooms majority of the participating teachers were found to be in favor of teaching CwD in the mainstream classrooms hence, the presence of CwD may not add to their existing list of problems.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regular teachers should be provided appropriate training along with onsite support for inclusion of CwD in the mainstream classrooms
- Regular handholding of teachers engaged in inclusive classrooms, is essential for the success of attempts towards inclusive education
- Classes with large number of students should be divided into different sections
- Measures to encourage students to not only regularly attend school but also to take interest and cooperate with teachers, should be planned and taken
- Regular interactions between teachers and parents should be encouraged

8. CONCLUSION

In today's educational scenario, inclusion is latest rhetoric which has seeped at the level of field, and has entered in the vocabulary of teachers, parents and administrators. The time has arrived to empower the regular teachers to shoulder their responsibility in the inclusive education stage. This can be done through need based in-service teacher trainings for teacher already in service. For future teachers, training in inclusive pedagogy practices should be mandatory requirement for entry to service. Presence of CwD in the mainstream classrooms was not perceived as additional challenge by majority of teachers participating in the research, might be an indication towards inclusion becoming reality in not so distant future. The road ahead is difficult but full of hope.

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