

Status of Educable Mentally Challenged Children In the Inclusive Set-Up - Perception By the Teachers And Parents Related?



Education

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The harmonious development of all the powers of the human being- physical, social, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual is the purpose of education. The essential elements in the educative process are a creative mind, a well integrated self, socially useful purpose and experiences related to the interests, needs and abilities of individual as a participant in social living. In the past decades, education of children with disabilities has been a paradigm shift from a segregated education to inclusive education with non-disabled children. Mental deficiency or feeble-mindedness means marked limitation of intelligence, due to retarded development, which result in social and economic incompetence. Mentally challenged children (MCC) are characterized by low intelligence in comparison with normal children and there are various degrees of this retardation. The educable mentally retarded child has been defined as "One who has potentialities for development in minimum educability in the academic subjects of the school, social adjustment to such a point that he/she can get along independently in the community, and minimum occupational adequacy to such a degree that he/she can later support himself/herself partially or totally at the level (Sudha, 2005). They will be able to receive basic academic skills (reading, writing and arithmetic) and acquire self-help skill, which supports them to be socially and economically independent in the inclusive set-up. They learn social adoption only in an inclusive system of education. Inclusive setting will enable the MCC to get social approval. Inclusive setting provides opportunities for the MCC to acquire the competencies, skills, knowledge and understanding of which he/she is an individual of value, for himself/herself a part from any other characteristics. These children also develop adjustment character because of acceptance attitude by their peers. Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and build friendship, respect and understanding. MCC are best served in inclusive setting as this is a stage where they will need to exercise their daily living skills.

There are different views regarding the education of MCC, such as segregated setting and inclusive setting. Inclusive setting is better for the education of children who are mild mentally challenged. The inclusive classroom provides a setting for these children to interact with their peers of all levels of ability, thus most accurately mirroring the real world outside school. The inclusive setting provides these children with an opportunity to interact with children who may have different ways of learning or different abilities; again, mimicking real-world experience for these children as well (Watson, 2006). The MCC has potential abilities, which can be developed with appropriate education and training to make them self sufficient and productive members of society, instead of being shunned and segregated.

Revealing from the Related Studies

The studies conducted with teachers as sample revealed that the teachers had a favourable attitude towards inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classroom (Dukmak, 2013; Dragana et al., 2014). Teachers who have taken at least one special education course and those with several in-services about inclusion feel positively about it in comparison to teachers with no relevant coursework or in-services (Ernst & Margaret, 2009). Teach-

ers in Delhi had a moderate level of concerns to implement inclusive education in their schools (Nisha & Ajay, 2013).

Bochenck and Heafher (2009) indicated that parents of students with and without disabilities perceive the inclusive classroom meets their children's needs. Parents of children with Down syndrome were found to be more agreeable to inclusion and inclusive placements, in general as compared to parents of children with disabilities other than Down syndrome (Hilbert & Dawn, 2009).

Geetha and Annakodi (2006) found that majority of the heads of the schools, regular teachers, special teachers, parents of disabled students and parents of non-disabled students were supportive in promoting inclusive education.

Method of Study

The authors selected the survey method to evaluate the present status of Educable Mentally Challenged Children in the inclusive set-up.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up as perceived by teachers and parents;
2. To find out the significant relation, if any, between the status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up as perceived by teachers and parents.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relation between the status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up as perceived by the teachers and parents.

Population and Sample

The population of this study included 1337 teachers and 698 parents of educable mentally challenged children studying in Standards from II to V from normal schools in Kanyakumari District. The sample consisted 800 teachers and 500 parents of educable mentally challenged children.

Tool Used

The tool used in this study was RoWi's Scale on the Status of educable mentally challenged children studying in Inclusive Set-up (RoSoMI) developed by the authors (2011) which is meant for gathering data regarding the dimensions (a) Academic status, (b) Social status, (c) Psychological status, and (d) Administrative status. Content validity was established with the help of three experts. After this the tool has of 203 items, of which 117 were positive and 86 were negative.

After item analysis, the draft had 155 items, of which 113 were positive and 42 were negative. The authors established reliability of the tool by split half method, which was found to be 0.983 and the half-test reliability using the Spearman-Brown formula was found to be 0.991.

Analysis of Data

Table 1
Level of Status of EMCC in the Inclusive Set-up as perceived by the Teachers and Parents

Level	Teachers		Parents	
	No.	%	No.	%
Low	99	12.4	64	12.8
Moderate	585	73.1	346	69.2
High	116	14.5	90	18.0

The above table shows that, about three-fifth of the teachers(73.1%) and parents (69.2%) perceived the status of EMCC in the inclusive set-up as moderate.

Table 2
Relation between the Status of EMCC in the Inclusive Set-up as Perceived by the Teachers and Parents

Dimension	r value	P value
Academic status	0.36	0.00**
Social status	0.46	0.00**
Psychological status	0.46	0.00**
Administrative status	0.44	0.00**
Status as a whole	0.56	0.00**

** Significant at 0.01 level

Findings

1. More than three-fifth of the teachers perceived the status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up as moderate.
2. More than three-fifth of the parents perceived the status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up as moderate.
3. There is significant relation between the status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up as perceived by the teachers and parents. It is also true with all the dimensions - academic status, social status, psychological status and administrative status.

Interpretations and Discussions

More than 73.1% of the teachers and parents perceived the status of educable mentally challenged children in the inclusive set up as moderate. This finding draws support from the study by Shady et al. (2013) and reveals that most teachers (74%) believed that students with disabilities would be exposed to positive role models as a result of inclusion. Stauble (2009) studied that 48.5% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed that everyone benefits from inclusive practices. Elzein and Lutfi(2009) found that parents showed a positive attitude towards the level of inclusion.

Teachers and parents had significant relationship with respect to the perception of the status of EMCC in the inclusive set-up. It could have been due to the fact that both teachers and parents benefited mutually and with great cooperation, worked hard for the improvement of the academic, social and psychological status of mentally challenged children in the inclusive set-up. Parents often met the teachers of their children and practiced with their children based on teachers' direction. With respect to academic status, teachers gave simple home assignments for such children, and the parents also encouraged and

helped them not only to complete their assignment, but also to revise the study portion according to their pace. With respect to social status, both teachers and parents made their children mingle with other children and also encouraged other children to interact with them in a friendly manner. Both teachers and parents worked hard for the welfare of such children to develop their social competence, social interaction, co-operation and social skills. With regard to the psychological status, both teachers and parents worked hard to counsel such children to become self sufficient, acquire a positive self-esteem, develop an adjustable character, have an adventurous spirit and interest in life, and be independent and become members who would contribute to society. This finding is aligned with the study by Frederickson et al. (2006) and according to it, parents and teachers opined academic and social advantages as positive benefits of returning pupils with special educational needs from special to mainstream settings.

Recommendations

Teachers should have all the required skills, competency, knowledge and understanding in the field of general and special education. A teacher has a multi-faceted role. It includes doing the role of a specialised director of teaching, and being an embodiment of cultural values, morality and character. She/he should strive to become a friend and confidant of the educable mentally challenged child. She/he should be patient, cheerful, friendly and humorous. He /she should be able to provide opportunities and methods to the educable mentally challenged students to enable them to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live Teachers should create opportunities for each educable mentally challenged student to earn the respect from his/her peers as well as from his/her superiors. Teachers should help these students to make them feel as a member of the class. Teachers should promote socialization in the class. He/she should create cooperative learning groups. Teachers should continually monitor student participation and learning. Taking the time to direct greetings, questions, and explanations to the student increases their involvement in task and builds personal relationship. Teachers should give lots of praise and provide prompt feedback. Teachers should repeat instructions or directions frequently and ask the student if further clarification is necessary. Teachers should provide peer support to educable mentally challenged students through collaborative teaching and learning strategies.

Parents of children with special needs should be trained to provide the same services to the child at home as that given at the school, so that continuous and uniform inputs are available for the child. Since parents are with the child all his or her life, they have a wealth of information to offer the school about the child's growth and development, behavior, habits, feelings and responses. Since the parent was the child's first teacher, the parent is naturally suited for the job of classroom volunteer. The home that "backs up" the work of the school goes a long way to ensure good learning. Parents can provide opportunities for reinforcement of learning at home if they are aware of what is happening at school. Parents should build a positive relationship with their child's school. They should share information with the teacher/principal on inclusive practices. Parents can propose goals for language and behavior role models and document their child's need for social relationships. Parents can also propose the supports and training needs for inclusion. They should share their expectations about their child to the teachers. Parents should encourage their school to continue in its efforts towards inclusion. Parents should attend and participate in every IEP for their child. Parents should keep in touch with the school by attending Parent- Teacher conferences and other meetings about the disabled child.

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