

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING

DISABILITY IN AN INCLUSIVE SETUP

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ABSTRACT

Students with learning disability in an inclusive set up have been recognised more frequently now in many institutions. With identification, the issues related to teachers' attitude, pedagogical interventions and resource development etc. are critical for developing these institutes as inclusive set up. This paper explores these issues and perspective of stakeholders. Although, schools were making significant efforts related to education of students with SLD but the scope for improvement was clearly visible with respect to sensitization of the teachers and other staff. The paper suggests that there is a need to educate and sensitize teachers with respect to areas like assessment, pedagogy and communication with learners in an inclusive set up.

KEYWORDS: Students with Learning Disability

INTRODUCTION

"Vivek cannot copy from the blackboard. His handwriting is illegible and the teacher is always complaining about his poor spellings. He forgets name of places, cannot identify characters in a story and has a limited vocabulary. He keeps repeating similar mistakes while writing answers or taking class notes. Even after repeatedly pointing his mistakes, his teachers say that he deliberately repeats them."

The above case is not a single example. There are numerous similar examples existing in our Indian schools where cases like Vivek exist. Although these signs can be associated with anybody in a regular classroom. But in this case, Vivek is a child with specific learning disability which has led to other issues in the classroom. It has negatively affected his academic performance and his social relations in school also.

Parents and teachers usually discover the problem when the child begins to struggle with schoolwork. Teachers may notice a great difference between a student's oral performance, which could be very good, and his written work. In Indian schools, even the identification of specific learning disabilities in students is far from expected where, in most of the situations, the teachers and other stakeholders are inadequately aware about the problem which even leads to dropping out of the students from the school. Also, there is a great deal of individual variation among children with a learning disability.

For a student with learning disabilities, there is no escape; s/he or he is subjected to anything from degradation to long-suffering tolerance. Proof of inadequacies appears daily in the classroom. In the end, the student is held in low esteem, not only by classmates, but also often by his or her family (Roswell & Natchez, 1977)

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

After Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the inclusive education practices have gained high momentum. It has been seen that the maximum number of schools identifying the learning disabled are found in urban areas. According to the research conducted in this field, a large percentage of the enrolled students are learning disabled. As there is a lack of training for teachers and special educators, the students are generally wrongly identified or labelled which leads to inadequate learning experiences.

It is important that teacher training and sensitization should not be confined to policy making but should be imparted and implemented appropriately. Proper implementation of inclusive practices is essential and experiences of the children with disabilities matters the most in this regard.

So, if inclusive education has to become a reality, we need to emphasize more on its implication rather than just spreading the awareness about the need for inclusive education and formulating the policies. A child's experiences in school play an important role in making inclusion a successful experience.

The present research is specifically concerned with the experiences of children with specific learning disabilities in an inclusive set up in Indian context. This research sets out to investigate seldom- explored facets within research i.e. experiences of these children with their peers, teachers, special educators, counselors, principal, administrative staff and non teaching staff. The study also explores the method of identification of children with special needs and their curriculum related experiences.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For the present study, the sample schools were selected by Convenience Sampling. As the researcher is a teacher in one of the private schools of Delhi, it was convenient for her to conduct the study in the school. Sample of students identified as learning disabled, special educators and teachers was taken from two other regular private schools also which have provisions for students with specific learning disabilities. It was convenient for the researcher to collect data from these schools. The names of the students as well as the schools selected as sample for the study have not been mentioned, as desired by the schools.

The sample of students for the study were selected by purposive sampling as only those students were selected who were identified as learning disabled in the sample schools. The grade level of the sample of students was from VI-X as maximum number of students is identified at this level. A total of thirty students, nine teachers, two special educators and one counselor were selected as sample for the study.

A questionnaire containing thirty two questions was prepared to be given to the sample of students for the study. Thirty one questions in the questionnaire were close ended whereas; one question was open ended wherein the students could write about their overall experiences in the school. The researcher did not want children to miss out on their classes therefore questionnaires were given to the students.

The interview schedule was semi structured. The interviews of teachers and special educators were taken to know about the methods of identification used by them for children with specific learning disabilities and for triangulation of the data related to the experiences of the students taken in the sample.

The interviews of ten senior secondary government school teachers were also taken for comparison of experiences.

Policy and legislative frameworks were collected and reviewed from books and internet.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Identification of Learning Disabled in an Inclusive Setup

Interviews were conducted with the special educators of the schools taken as sample and it was found that the same procedure was applied in all the three schools except that in one school, a team of special educators visit the school and discuss various issues regarding the students with special needs.

The process of identification of children with learning disabilities involves the following steps:

- Academic concerns of the students are first shared by the home room teacher / class teacher / subject teacher(s) with the counselor and the special educator.
- Analysis of daily work and exam performance is then done by the team of home room teacher, special educator and the counselor.
- Error analysis of work samples (analysis of spellings, calculations etc.) is then conducted by the team.
- Detailed past history of the child regarding academics and developmental history is studied through interaction with parents, guardians, previous teachers and tutors.
- Analysis of all the previous academic records is conducted by the special educator.
- Informal educational assessment is conducted to ascertain the grade level of the child. (Worksheet in Annexure 4)
- If the child seems to be functioning two grades below his present grade, he/she is recommended for formal assessment.
- Formal assessment is done using standardized tools comprising of a battery of tests for identifying specific learning disabilities.

A major factor that makes it difficult to assess a learning disability is the confusing nature of the disability itself. The category of “learning disability” continues to be ill defined and tends to act as a dumping ground for all kinds of learning problems. The absence of any clear-cut criteria adds to the confusion. In addition, there is a great deal of variation in characteristics among learning disabled individuals, which makes assessment difficult.

The absence of testing instruments relevant to Indian students is another major drawback. Most tests are designed for native English speakers and have items which lie outside the cultural experience of the average Indian student. For example, pictures of igloos, snow boots, hot dogs etc.

Teacher training does not adequately prepare teachers to understand and interpret the test results in informal assessments. Formal assessments can be expensive too.

On the other hand, a good, comprehensive assessment saves a lot of time and allows timely remedies to be put in place. For many families, the diagnosis of ‘learning disability’ actually comes as a relief. Finally, the parents get to know

what is wrong with their child. Once the teachers and the parents know about the child's struggle, they can start helping her/him.

Relations with Peers

In the analysis, it was found that 53.4% of the total students taken in the sample have many friends in their class whereas 23.3% students have very few or some friends in their class. They do not speak much to all the classmates but have few very good friends. This indicates that some students have adjustment problems in their classroom with their peers. The analysis also indicates that most of the students with specific learning disabilities are well adjusted in their classes and their peers also show friendly attitude towards them. It is observed that most of the students with specific learning disabilities do not show any signs of maladjustment with their peers in their classes, however, there are few cases in which the students do not wish to take remedial classes provided by the school as their friends are not asked to take them and they feel embarrassed for the same. Though rarely, but it has also been observed that some students with learning disabilities tend to dominate their peers as somewhere inside, they possess a complex of not being at par with the class level.

It is well indicated in the analysis that most of the students with specific learning disabilities (40 %) have many friends in their school. 30 % students have some friends, 16.7 % students have very few friends whereas 13.3 % students have no friends in the school other than those in their own classes. It is observed that the non disabled students do not show any impolite or unfriendly behavior towards students with specific learning disabilities and easily make friends with their juniors/seniors in the school buses, vans etc. Though the students are not teased by their peers but some students do feel hesitant to join the remedial classes when asked to. It may be possible that the students who have very few (16.7 %) friends may not feel very comfortable in the company of others than their classmates. Though 'students with no friends' (13.3 %) comprises a small percentage of the sample but it indicates that these students face adjustment problems in the class and are not very contented in the school environment. The teachers, at times, need to convince these students as well as their parents for the same. Also, the teachers here play an important role in sensitizing other students regarding the need and importance of remedial classes being provided.

The analysis clearly indicates that the students with learning disabilities have most of their friends in their class. This indicates that these students have healthy relationships with their classmates and with students of other classes. 13.3 % students in the sample have most of their friends in senior classes and 6.6 % students in the sample have most of their friends in junior classes or outside school. The analysis indicates that most of the students with learning disabilities do not face any problems in making friends with their peers. Along with the students of their class, they also interact with the students of other classes. Also, they like to interact with the other students whom they meet during lunchtime, in the games field and in the school buses etc. However, there are certain students who have most of their friends outside their school. This is indicative of the fact that these students do not feel very comfortable in the school environment and prefer making friends outside school.

Most of the students with learning disabilities (45.5 %) play with their friends during the lunch break. 32.2 % like to chat with their friends. 3.2 % student's chat and share their lunch with others. Whereas, 19.3 % students in the sample like to sit alone. When asked, what do they do alone, the students replied that they don't feel like playing or speaking to others during the lunch break but like to see others playing. After having their lunch with others, they like to go for a stroll

alone or complete their pending tasks. These students seem to be hesitant to ask others to involve them but enjoy themselves if they are invited by others for chatting or playing. These results are an indicator of the fact that though there is a small percentage of such students who have difficulties in adjustment, certain measures need to be taken up by inclusive set ups for these students as they have either very few or no friends in their schools.

Most of the students with learning disabilities (50 % of the sample) discuss their personal problems with their school friends which show that they have a good rapport with them and trust them. This indicates their strong belief in their school friends and their extent of reliance on them. 23.5 % students in the sample shared their personal problems with their family members. 17.7 % students in the sample shared their problems with the counselor and 8.8 % with the teachers. This percentage seems to be low and indicates that a better rapport needs to establish between the teachers and the students with learning disabilities with regard to sharing personal problems. Low percentage of this group of students indicates that either the teachers are less sensitive or not well trained to understand the specific issues and special needs of these children.

One student shared her problems with the special educator. Two students responded that they try to solve their problems themselves and do not share them with anyone. This again indicates the need of more sensitization both for teachers and students as well as proper training for teachers.

According to 56.7 % students in the sample, their classmates never make fun of them if they commit a mistake. 33.3 % students believe that their classmates sometimes make fun of their mistakes. 3.3 % students feel that their classmates always make fun of them when they commit a mistake. 6.7 % students feel that their classmates often made fun of them when they committed a mistake. Although most of the students admitted that they too made fun of their classmates but it was never related to academics in particular from both the sides. It is done just to enjoy the light moments with their peers. But sometimes, the students with specific learning disabilities may get an inferiority complex because of the jokes cracked especially if they are directly/indirectly related to the mistakes made due to their disability.

Most of the students in the sample (56.7 %) always like to work in group with their peers. 20 % of the students either liked to work often in groups and another 20 % liked to work in groups sometimes. 1 student (comprising 3.3 % of the sample) never likes to work in a group. When asked the reason, she/he responded that she/he doesn't like it when others don't listen to her/him and rather likes to work independently. The researcher observed that the schools, in which these students study, frequently organize activities which require group work and collaboration such as making rangoli, decorating the class etc. Some students with specific learning disabilities do not like to participate in such activities. Many students said that they take part in such activities only after constant persuasion by their teachers and admitted that they do enjoy the activities later though they are usually hesitant in the beginning.

50 % students in the sample feel good about the support provided by their peers and feel that their peers always support them whenever a teacher appreciates them and in their moments of pride. 26.7 % students feel that their peers encourage them sometimes and 23.3 % feel that they are often encouraged by their peers in their special moment such as when they receive a pat on the back by the teachers or when they perform well in sports, art etc. None of the students in the sample was of the view that her/his peers never encouraged her/him.

Experiences with Teachers

According to the results of the analysis, 50 % of the students in the sample feel that they are sometimes

appreciated for their work by their teachers and 43.3 % of the students in the sample feel that they are always appreciated. The students in these categories also feel that their teachers always encourage them to do better and guide them in the correct direction. 6.7 % students in the sample feel that they are rarely appreciated for their work by their teachers. Some of these students tend to lose interest in their work whereas others feel that they tend to work harder and with more sincerity to grab teachers' attention and attain appreciation. Low percentage of this group of students indicates that the teachers are less sensitive towards the importance of motivation and not well trained to understand the special needs of these children.

According to the responses given by the students, 60 % students in the sample feel that they sometimes get an opportunity to be on stage as their teachers follow the policy of giving everyone a chance to speak/perform on stage during morning assembly and other such events. 23.4 % students in the sample feel that they rarely get such an opportunity as sometimes they are not willing to participate due to the small part given to them to be spoken/performed on the stage or at other times they are hesitant. 16.6 % students in the sample feel that they always get an opportunity to be on stage whenever they wish to participate in an event, though they may/may not get a very big role. All the students, however feel that they are encouraged and motivated by their teachers to be on stage even for a short duration and usually the participation is made compulsory for many events such as sports day, annual day etc.

46.6 % students in the sample were satisfied about the attitude of teachers in encouraging the students to participate in different activities. 36.7 % students in the sample felt that their teachers sometimes encouraged them and 16.7 % students in the sample responded that their teachers rarely encouraged them to participate in different activities in the school. These students feel that they get ample of chances as there are a lot of activities being organized. Some students willingly participate whereas others need to be persuaded. Thus, there are some students who get neglected during different activities which indicate a need for better training and sensitization practices for teachers.

As per the data of responses from the students, 71 % of the students in the sample find their teachers to be having a friendly attitude towards them. They feel comfortable in sharing their personal as well as school related problems with their teachers. 19.3 % students in the sample find their teachers to be quite strict with them whereas 9.7 % of the students taken in the sample responded that their teachers are strict at times and friendly at other. They feel that the teachers are strict in terms of homework, notebook collection, correction of the work, revision etc and friendly when they have a class teacher period/home room period, picnic, visit, outstation tour etc. Students with specific learning disabilities need continuous encouragement and space to work. They make repeated mistakes which may not be dealt with strict nature of teacher.

The analysis of this question shows that 76.7 % of the students in the sample get activity worksheets for all the subjects. 13.3 % of the students in the sample get activity worksheets for 3-4 subjects and 6.7 % of the students in the sample get activity worksheets for 1-2 subjects. All the students however are given extra questions in all the subjects. Sometimes the teachers write them on the chalkboard, else 2-3 copies of the questions are pinned to the soft boards inside the classrooms and the students are asked to note down the questions from there.

The teachers and parents of the students in the sample meet frequently to discuss various issues regarding these students. Mostly, the parents of recently identified students with learning disabilities are asked to meet the teachers and the special educator quite frequently. The parents of 54.8 % of the students in the sample meet the teachers once in a month to discuss the progress of their ward(s). These are mostly the students who do not show any kind of behavioral problems in

the school and attend remedial classes regularly. The parents of students who are recently admitted to school, have been identified recently, show any kind of behavioral/social problem or are hesitant to join remedial classes are met more frequently by the teachers and special educators as compared to those who do not show/have such problems. Such parents are provided guidance and counseling sessions by the school counselor and are also apprised by various ways of dealing with the problems faced by their children and by themselves. Parents of 29 % of the students in the sample meet the teachers once in a fortnight and those of 9.7 % of the students in the sample meet the teachers whenever required. However, special appointments are given to parents of these students at the time of parent teacher meetings. Parents of 6.5 % of the students in the sample meet the teachers once in a week.

Group activities and peer tutoring form an important component of remedial measures for children with learning disabilities. 43.3 % of the students in the sample responded that they are often given tasks by their teachers which require collaboration with other students. 33.3 % of the students are sometimes assigned such tasks whereas 23.4 % students in the sample are always given work which encourages team work. Such tasks help in promoting cooperative behavior among the students and help them in excelling further.

Coordination of group activities is mostly done by teachers in the schools taken as sample. Some students are then made team leaders. 46.7 % students in the sample often coordinate group activities. 40 % students in the sample sometimes get an opportunity to coordinate group activities. 13.3 % students always get a chance. Some students somehow feel hesitant to volunteer as coordinators but like to participate and watch such activities. The analysis shows a need to encourage the students to acquire leadership qualities and self confidence.

A large percentage of students in the sample (47.8 %) approach their special educator(s) for their subject related queries. 41.3 % students feel comfortable in asking their queries from their teachers and 8.7 % ask their subject related queries from their parents. These students feel hesitant to ask their teachers. One student replied that she asks her friend to solve her subject related queries. Many students responded that they approach both their teachers and special educators for solving their problems. As the students in the sample schools are given freedom to express themselves during the classroom sessions and the teachers also encourage the students to come up with their queries during the discussions, 41.3 % seems to be lesser to what may be expected in such an environment.

The analysis indicates the positive attitude of teachers towards problem solving with the students. 80 % students in the sample responded that their teachers readily answer their queries. 13.3 % students in the sample answered that their teachers do not answer their queries readily and encourage them to answer/solve them themselves and provide support in the form of clues and leading questions. They are sometimes also provided with web links and names of books to search answers to their queries. 56.6 % students in the sample get alternative questions if they are unable to solve the ones given to them.

Most of the students in the sample feel that their teachers are taking utmost efforts to provide education of comparable quality and modify the syllabus for them according to their individual needs. The syllabus for all the subjects is being modified for 56.65 students in the sample. Syllabus for some of the subjects is being modified for 33.3 % students in the sample. These subjects mostly include mathematics, science and social science.

50 % of the students in the sample feel that they sometimes get an opportunity to display their creativity and the rest responded that they always get opportunities. The result of this analysis indicates that the schools chosen for the study

provide ample of opportunities to the students with specific learning disabilities to show their creativity and encourage them to move ahead in life. It was also observed by the researcher that the schools give due importance to many activities in the school which involve poetry writing/recitation, drawing, painting, sketching, quizzes etc.

Experiences with Special Educator/Counselor

86.7% of the students in the sample feel that their special educator and counselor always help them with their daily tasks. They find their special educator and counselor to be very supportive and cooperative. 13.3 % of the students in the sample feel that their special educator and counselor sometimes help them with their daily tasks. The special educators in these schools only help these students in the subjects which they teach them. Also, the children responded that the special educators usually use a large number of ways to explain the concepts to the students and ask them to solve the problems themselves.

Most of the students in the sample (90 %) feel that their special educator and counselor help them in working to achieve their goals whereas 10 % of the students are not sure. According to the former, the special educator and counselor regularly give them certain tips for knowing how to perform better in the tasks they are assigned and also to control and modify certain behavioral aspects. These students are also guided to get information about their prospective careers from the internet, newspapers, magazines etc. The students and the parents are guided by the special educator and counselor regarding the rules of CBSE for board examinations and the choices of subjects for students according to their needs and interests.

According to the analysis, 96.7 % of the students in the sample i.e 29 students felt that timely guidance is provided in their school by teachers and counselors. One student was not sure about the matter as she/he had been attending very few classes in her/his school.

Experiences with Principal/Administrative Staff/Non Teaching Staff

In the sample schools, the principals keep a list of children with special needs with them and keep inquiring about them from their teachers, special educators and counselors. Also, the progress reports of these children are discussed in detail when the result of the cycle tests and terminal exams are being discussed. 63.3 % of the students in the sample feel that the non teaching staffs of their school are very helpful. Though they go to them once in awhile, they are always helped with patience by them. 26.7 % of the students in the sample feel that the non teaching staffs of their school helps them whenever they need it and 10 % of the students in the sample are sometimes helped by the non teaching staff.

The principals meet the parents of these children whenever required. Also, the progress reports of these children are discussed in detail when the result of the cycle tests and terminal exams are being discussed. As per the analysis, 40 % of the students in the sample have positive interactions with their school principal once in a month which may be during some event or an interactive session with the entire class. 30 % of the students in the sample have positive interactions with their principal once in a week. 20 % of the students in the sample never had any positive interactions with their school principal which indicates a need for better sensitization among the school principals regarding the specific requirements of constant motivation and other emotional needs of children with specific learning disabilities. 10 % of the students in the sample responded that their principal addresses them regularly in the assembly and begins their day with a positive note.

Experiences Related to School Curriculum

47 % of the students in the sample like art and craft activities. They enjoy sketching, painting and coloring. 31.2 % of the students in the sample enjoy being a part of co-curricular activities like dance and theatre. 12.5 % of the students in the sample like to participate in activities performed in the subject classes in their schools. Three students (comprising 9.3 % of the sample) like to participate in sports and wish to make their careers in the field.

Sports, according to the analysis, is the favourite period of most of the students (45.2 %) in the sample. 25.8 % of the students in the sample enjoy doing art and craft (details mentioned in the analysis of Q5). 22.6 % students like either of the subjects; English, Maths, Social Science and Home Science.

Students have varied choices and interests with respect to classroom activities. As evident by analysis, students enjoy doing art and craft activities the most. 36.7 % of the students had voted for art and craft being the most enjoyable activity for them. 30 % of the students in the sample enjoy reading in class and 23.3 % students responded that they like either listening to the teacher, performing activities, taking part in class quiz or going to the audio visual room. 10 % of the students in the sample like to write in the class. Others prefer to do activities mentioned above rather than writing.

Experiences Related to Infrastructure Facilities

The classroom sessions in the schools from which the sample is taken are very interactive providing space to the students to express themselves freely. 42.5 % of the students in the sample responded that their teachers mostly teach by lecture method with frequent discussions, oral recapitulation, quizzes and many a times ask them to do certain questions on the chalkboard. 30 % of the students in the sample responded that power point presentations and audio visual aids are extensively used by their teachers for either explaining a concept or for revision. Students really enjoy these audio visual sessions. 27.5 % of the students in the sample responded that the teachers in their schools mostly teach using charts and models. Many students in the sample had mentioned that all of the above are being used by their teachers.

60 % of the students in the sample responded that the concepts of subjects like Maths, Science and Computer Science are mostly taught by practicals and activities in their school. A hand on experience helps the students to understand the concepts easily and retain them for longer time. 26.3 % of the students in the sample responded that the concepts of these subjects are mostly taught by lecture method which includes frequent discussions, oral recapitulation and quizzes. 13.1 % of the students in the sample responded that they are frequently given worksheets for these subjects. Many students indicated that a combination of all the three options are being used by their teachers for teaching the concepts in Maths, Science and Computer Science

50 % of the students in the sample responded that they visit the laboratories of their school once in four days which indicates that the teachers in these schools are taking utmost care to integrate theory with practicals. 26.6 % of the students in the sample go the laboratories of their school once in a fortnight and 13.3 % of the students in the sample visit the laboratories of their school once in a month. 10 % of the students in the sample responded that they visit the laboratories of their school whenever required as per the demand of the topic being studied in the class.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Identification of the Students with Learning Disabilities

The study revealed that though there are specific rules in the west for identification of the students with learning disabilities (IDEA) but there is no such policy for them in India. The condition of these students is vulnerable in the government schools of Delhi as most of them do not even have a special educator or/ and a counselor. The teachers have absolutely no idea of the process of identification and remedial measures for these students. Though CBSE has made some provisions for students with learning disabilities, the identification of these students plays a critical role. In the schools taken as sample, the process of identification begins when the students show signs of low academic performance. The process of assessment initiates only when the class teacher or the subject teacher discusses the concerns with the special educator. Teachers need to be properly trained and sensitized for such a task. Any kind of carelessness or inadequate training can lead to unnecessary labeling of the child. The teachers, special educators and the counselors must consider the social and emotional difficulties of the child before considering the report of the formal assessment. The cooperation of parents is essential for the process of assessment and remedial measures and requires due sensitization and knowledge of the situation.

Experiences with Peers

It can be concluded from the analysis that though most of the students with specific learning disabilities are well adjusted in the inclusive class rooms; there exist a percentage of students who are still struggling to move with the system. These students must be taken care of and their needs should not be ignored by any means. Since these students do not interact much with their peers, it becomes essential for the teachers to have a friendly attitude towards them and gain an insight to their needs and desires. It is necessary that the teachers should be trained properly to spread awareness and sensitize the non disabled students in an appropriate manner. The non disabled students should be taught to have an attitude of working with the disabled rather than working for them.

It was found in the analysis that certain learning disabled students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) tend to be distractive during class room sessions and is usually not attentive. Teachers must deal with such students with due patience. The peers of such students should not be allowed to make fun of these students or pass comments. The teachers' attitude in such situations definitely reflects upon the students.

There seems to be a considerable percentage of teach disabled students who prefer being alone at certain times during school hours. Though these students should not be forced upon by the teachers to mingle with others but a sensitive and compassionate attitude is required within the teachers to understand the feelings and emotions of these students. The teachers must try their best to encourage these students to interact with others. At the same time, the non disabled peers of these students must also be given certain directions regarding their behavior. One student in the sample doesn't like to work in the group as s/he feels bad when others do not listen to her/him. The teachers must go the root of the problem in such situations and intervene as and when required. Appropriate intervention of an adult is essential in such cases.

Students with specific learning disabilities have certain special emotional needs. Though they may/may not have a high IQ level, usually they are unable to achieve good grades/marks in academics. A teacher must be sensitive to such issues and must propagate the message to the students that one should not judge anyone by her/his grades or marks. Peer

tutoring and cooperative learning must be encouraged in the class rooms.

Experiences with Teachers

Students with specific learning disabilities need constant motivation and encouragement to deal with the stress and storms of their daily lives. It was analyzed in the research that though 43.3 % of the students in the sample feel that they are always appreciated and 50 % of the students in the sample feel that they are sometimes appreciated for their work by their teachers, some students (6.7 %) in the sample feel that they are rarely appreciated for their work by their teachers. The teachers must be more sensitive to such special needs of these children. Such sensitization and knowledge can be impacted by including Special Education as a compulsory paper in pre service programmes as well as by regularly conducting seminars and workshops for in service teachers.

Though hundred percent participation in the events held in the school is a key policy of the schools taken as sample, 23.4 % students in the sample feel that they rarely get an opportunity to be on stage. More motivation and encouragement is thus required in this sphere by the teachers so as to provide ample of opportunities to the learning disabled.

In the analysis, it was also discovered that 16.7 % students in the sample feel that their teachers rarely encouraged them to participate in different activities in the school. Though, according to the teachers they are taking utmost efforts in inspiring these students, it seems that they need to be more supportive while dealing with these students.

Though most of the students (71 %) in the sample are of the opinion that their teachers are quite friendly, a considerable percentage (19.3 %) of the students in the sample finds their teachers to be quite strict. It was also mentioned by the teachers that they are quite friendly to the students but they usually are very particular with the written work so as to minimize escapism among the students. Students with specific learning disabilities need continuous encouragement and space to work. They make repeated mistakes which may not be dealt with strict nature of teacher.

Regarding the meetings between the parents and the teachers, both students and teachers are of the view that such meetings are held quite frequently as and when required.

It was also analyzed that though most of the students in the sample are quite frank with the teachers and special educators, there is still scope for more interaction so that those who are hesitant to share their academic/non academic problems may feel free to do so.

The students in these schools get sufficient opportunities to display their creativity. The bulletin boards, activity rooms and labs of these schools are decorated with the work of these students. Also, these students get enough opportunities during regular class room sessions to exhibit their work to others.

Experiences with Special Educator/Counselor

In two schools, from which the sample of students was selected, the special educators are present during the school hours whereas in one school, a team of special educators visit the school and guide the teachers. The special educators in the other two schools guide the students with specific learning disabilities and help these students in the subjects which they teach them. The special educators usually use a large number of ways to explain the concepts to the students and ask them to try to solve the problems themselves. Some students share their personal problems with their

special educator/ counselor and the percentage of this category of students is higher than those who share their problems with their teachers.

Experiences with Principal/Administrative Staff/Non Teaching Staff

Workshops are held in the sample schools for providing knowledge regarding the learning disabilities for the teaching staff and the principal of the school but not for the non teaching as well as administrative staff. Such workshops and seminars must be conducted for them as well, as they form an integrated part of the school and though rarely but the students do need to visit them at times. In the sample schools, the principals keep a list of children with special needs with them and keep inquiring about them from their teachers, special educators and counselors. Though some of the students responded that they have positive interactions with their principals quite often, others were of the opinion that they do not meet their principals very frequently. Some students mentioned that their school principal begins their day with a positive note in the morning assembly. More frequent interactions with the students should be held by the principals to encourage and motivate these students.

Experiences Related to School Curriculum

Most of the students with learning disabilities like the non academic periods more than they enjoy the academic ones. This is true with their non disabled peers also. Though, according to the students and teachers in the sample, a variety of methods are being used in the sample schools to make their classroom sessions interesting, it seems that these methods need to be used more frequently so as to gain the interest of the students in these subjects.

Experiences Related to Infrastructure Facilities

The activity rooms, learning centre and the labs of the schools from which the sample of students was taken are well equipped. Though the teachers use lecture cum discussions, charts, models, power point presentations, animated teaching material and activities but it seems that these methods/techniques are not being used as frequently as they should be. The students visit the labs quite frequently and as per the need of the topic.

CONCLUSIONS

Though a lot of efforts are being taken by the schools from which the students were selected as sample so as to promote inclusion, still there seems to be scope for more sensitization and training amongst the school staff. As per the analysis, most of the students with specific learning disabilities are well adjusted in these set ups but there are few who need constant motivation and encouragement for their settlement. Certain policies should be implemented especially for these students for whom academics prove to be a huge struggle. The innate qualities of these students should be explored extensively by the teachers by providing adequate opportunities to them. The teachers should be well trained in the inclusive set ups to identify children with specific learning disabilities at the earliest possible as early intervention plays a vital role in such cases.

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