

TEACHING THE STUDENTS WHO LEARN DIFFERENTLY

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ABSTRACT:- Classroom teachers know their students and have the ability to observe them in their daily environment. They are in the best position to recognize the strengths and need of their students. They possess an inner ability to analyse and develop educational programmes and are the first ones to recognize that a student is struggling to learn.

The main purpose of the paper is to understand how a classroom teacher can recognize a differently abled student and how can they impart education and help them learn in an inclusive environment. Students with special learning needs have an equal right to experience school environment as much as their peers.

These students are generally taught using the pull-out approach under a special programme which frequently leads to addressing failures instead of focussing on prevention methods. This paper will also discuss various techniques and approaches to be used in an Inclusive classroom, which can prove to be successful for students with learning disabilities to see themselves as successful learners.

KEYWORDS:- Educational programmes, Inclusive environment, Inclusive classroom, differently abled student, special learning needs, learning disabilities, pull-out approach.

INTRODUCTION:-

Many great personalities like Thomas Alwa Edison and Albert Einstein were once discarded by the school system as failures. Learning disability or specific learning disability is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder which manifest in childhood as persistent difficulties in learning to efficiently read, write or do simple mathematical calculations despite normal intelligence, conventional schooling, intact hearing and vision, adequate motivation and socio-cultural opportunity. It is now known that a learning disability is not connected to mental retardation. The learning

disabled frequently have high IQs. It is also not a single disorder, but includes disabilities in any areas related to reading, language and mathematics. Generally if a child's cognitive ability is much higher than his or her academic performance, the student is often diagnosed with a learning disability.

A singular challenge facing education today is the challenge of providing the best, most effective education possible for children and youth with learning problems. In India due to overcrowded class and the stress on exam oriented learning and large curriculum, multi-sensory teaching, experimental learning and encouragement of thinking has not found a place on a regular basis. This has led to a large number of under or non-achievers and eventually school and college dropouts.

There is a general notion that students with a special need in education have to be taught using the pull-out approach which refers to teaching and learning under special environmental settings. However this approach has according to many researchers failed to meet the educational needs of differently abled students and has unwillingly created more barriers to their successful education. The approach of Inclusive education on the other hand, which explains the importance of a Co-teaching environment, has proved to be very fruitful for the overall growth of special students.

These differently abled students can learn, but may learn in different ways. Educators can make use of various approaches in an Inclusive classroom to address the learning need of all the students in the classroom. It is important for the teacher to assess the students need and learning patterns in order to make the teaching and learning process more effective.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:-

- To understand the concept of an inclusive classroom.

- To understand different ways in which a teacher can make a differently abled student learn in an Inclusive classroom.
- To analyse how teachers can make use of assessments to identify and address the learning gaps.

METHODOLOGY:-

The study focuses on extensive study of Secondary data collected from various research papers, thesis and websites which focused on various aspects of the teaching and learning process for the differently abled students.

WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM?

Preeti scores A+ in all the class tests and is bored at school. Raj has dyslexia. Jyoti uses crutches to move around. Mohammed cannot see very well. Sara excels in mathematics but struggles with spelling. Shruti can't sit still for more than 20 minutes. And Vinayak has autism. What do they all have in common? They are all learners, and all have the same right to a high-quality education. All they need is a very effective Inclusive classroom. Inclusion refers to the practice of students with disabilities learning alongside their peers in general

education classrooms (Gilhool, 1989). Thus, classrooms that engage in this practice can be referred to as being inclusive. An Inclusive classroom eliminates the need for pulling out special students out of general education for instruction and instead makes use of the Pull-In approach.

Some benefits of an Inclusive classroom are as follows:

- Special students are less absent in an inclusive classroom.
- They develop stronger skills in reading and math.
- They are more likely to have jobs and pursue higher education.

TEACHING METHODS FOR AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

I will discuss three methods for including the learning disability students in an Inclusive classroom.

I-CO-TEACHING-

Co-teaching is a set up where in a general teacher and a special education teacher teach together to provide support to the special students. There are five models under the Co-teaching method and they are as follows:

METHOD	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS
One Teach, One Assist	One teacher instructs all students while a second provides additional support for those who need it	Students with and without disabilities can receive assistance on challenging Material
Station Teaching	Students are divided into three separate groups with two groups working with one of the two teachers and the third working independently	Students with and without disabilities benefit from receiving small group instruction
Parallel Teaching	Teachers plan lessons together before splitting students in two groups, and then teach the same lesson to these small groups	Students with and without disabilities benefit from working in small groups, teachers also benefit by learning from each other's expertise
Alternative Teaching	One teacher is responsible for teaching and the other is responsible for pre-teaching and re-teaching concepts to students who need additional support	Students with disabilities, and other students struggling with challenging material, can receive additional direct instruction
Team Teaching	Teachers provide instruction together in the same classroom and may take turns leading instruction or modelling student behaviour	Students with disabilities especially learn well from having behaviour modelled, and students without disabilities likely benefit as well

II- DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Differentiated instruction involves students with Learning difficulty, and others with diverse learning needs, being supplied with instructional methods and materials that are matched to their individual needs (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Marshak, 2012). The use of differentiated instruction requires general and special educators to possess flexible teaching approaches as well as to be flexible in adjusting the curriculum based upon student need.

Tomlinson (2001) provides five guidelines for successfully differentiating instruction in inclusive classrooms: (a) clarify all key concepts and generalizations, (b) use assessment as a teaching tool to extend, not only measure, instruction, (c) make critical and creative thinking a goal of lesson design, (d) engage every student in learning, and (e) provide a balance of tasks between what is assigned by the teacher and selected by the student.

III- PEER-MEDIATED INSTRUCTION

Peer mediated instruction are a set of alternative teaching strategies that employ the use of students as instructors for students in their class. Consequently, when PMII are used the role of the teacher goes from being the primary provider of instruction to that of a facilitator of peer provided instruction. Peer provided instruction can be direct (e.g., tutoring) or indirect (e.g., modelling) and can focus on either academic or social-emotional development (Kalfus, 1984).

ASSESSMENTS TECHNIQUES TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS THE LEARNING GAPS:-

Assessment should not be an end in itself, but part of a process which teachers can use to identify and address learning gaps, as well as to continually support student learning. If a student is having difficulty achieving learning outcomes, teachers should not only try new instructional approaches, they should give the student additional opportunities to succeed.

There are various types of assessments and each should be used according to its intended purpose.

- **Assessment for learning, or formative assessment**, is used to make visible the knowledge and understanding of each student. Assessment for learning is ongoing and helps educators decide how to help students progress. Educators use this style of assessment as an investigative tool to discover what their students know and are able to do, and whether there are any preconceptions, confusions, or gaps in their knowledge. Examples of formative assessment tools include observations, checklists, writing samples, and running records.
- **Assessment of learning, or summative assessment**, is used to confirm what students know and to demonstrate whether students have met curricular outcomes or student-specific outcomes, or to certify proficiency. Summative assessment includes anything for which students receive a grade or mark, such as projects, tests, exams, final drafts of written work, and so forth. It is generally used for reporting purposes.
- **Assessment as learning** is used by students to develop their skills of metacognition (i.e., their ability to understand their own thought processes). Assessment as learning comes from the idea that learning is not just a matter of transferring ideas from someone who is knowledgeable to someone who is not. Rather, learning is an active process of cognitive restructuring that occurs when individuals interact with new ideas.

No single individual can gather all of the information necessary to identify, understand, and plan for a student with a learning disability. Planning for a student with specific learning needs is a collaborative effort that involves a core team: parent(s), educators, and student. If learning difficulties persist, the team may be expanded to include other members of the school staff as well as clinicians and/or consultants.

CONCLUSION:-

Carl A. Cohn, executive director of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, points out, "It's important...to realize that special education students are first and foremost general education students."

Development of a holistic and progressive education system is the first step to ensuring the learning needs of all children are addressed. This will create a welcoming environment for all children; ensure genuine learning,

achievement and success irrespective of the child's academic potential. It is from the children we must learn. It is they who will tell us their difficulties and how we can help. It is for us teachers, educationists and policy makers to "listen" to what the child is saying. Administrators and teachers must be allowed to collectively contribute skills and resources to carry out appropriate educational plans. It does mean the nurturing of a shared commitment to the future of all children with special learning needs.

Ironically if teachers were to spend time teaching children with a learning disability, teaching would automatically attain a high quality. In other words, children with learning disability would make better teachers of us.

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