

SPECIAL REPORT**CHALLENGES V/S ACHIEVEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN KARACHI****ABSTRACT**

Inclusive Education (IE) of children with atypical development is a great challenge, as schools here, predominantly do not grant them admission, on grounds of having negligible infrastructure to cater to their needs. This is usually based upon inaccurate presumptions about the children's (impoverished) physical, social, communicative, intellectual and literacy skills, and creates more obstacles towards achieving IE. The UN establishes education as every child's right and proposes that, all children regardless of their abilities must go to the same school, making it incumbent on the school system to fulfill the requirements of every child. Today, the developed countries have a well established IE system, and have nearly shelved the 'special school' methodology.

To ascertain, this realm in Karachi the speech language therapists and students of College of Speech Language & Hearing Sciences(CSLHS), Ziauddin University, indulged with five parents, whose children, despite having speech-language impediments, found a way into mainstream schools, in here. The aim was to gain an insight towards achieving IE for all children deserving to be integrated into mainstream schools in Pakistan.

The results of this study although not very encouraging, pointed towards establishing early intervention, and training school personnel in identifying and working with differently-abled children in their classroom.

KEY WORDS

Differently-abled Children, Inclusive Education, Mainstream School, Trained Teachers, Speech Language Disorders, Classroom.

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[Siddiqui AA, Punjani A. Challenges v/s Achievements of Inclusive Education in Karachi. Pak. j. rehabil. 2014;3(1):26-28]

INTRODUCTION

In most developing countries, acceptance for atypically developing children in mainstream society is a matter of serious consequence¹ causing emotional, financial and social hardships to their parents and caregivers. The key to a good society is to have natural acceptance and support for the development and progress of all its members⁴. In this article we will be discussing the challenges and achievements of mainstream education² for children with speech, language and hearing disorders in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

Five parents of children receiving speech language therapy at College of Speech Language and Hearing Sciences (CSLHS) were interviewed individually, one after another, and the information thus obtained was maintained under strict confidentiality. The child was not allowed to know about this process. These children had been selected for this study, because they had been enrolled into privately run, local, mainstream schools having English (L2) as the medium of instruction^{3,5}, whilst they communicated in Urdu (L1) at home. The children had different speech and language disorders namely misarticulations, autism, specific language impairment and hearing impairment. This cross section of disorders was taken in order to determine the ease/difficulty of obtaining admission into the mainstream schools. Some of the common speech and language therapy goals amongst the children were enhancing lexical and morphosyntactic skills, improving auditory memory and sequencing, and teaching phonic skills.

There were 2 girls (G1, G2) and 3 boys (B1, B2, B3), all within the 3-6 years of age. They presented with the disorders shown in Table 1:

Table 1: The varied speech language disorders, in the children of this study.

Child	Type of Speech Language Impairment
G1	Attention Deficit Disorder and expressive language impairment
G2	Misarticulations or Unclear speech in a bilingual home
B1	Specific Language Impairment
B2	Austin and delayed/deviant language development
B3	Hearing impairment & delayed development of speech-language skills.

The Parent interview made the following queries :

1. Personal Identification (Name, age, sex, class of child)
2. Age of diagnosis of speech, language or hearing disorder.
3. Details of intervention at CSLHS (speech and language therapy)
4. Name/s of school/s enrolled in.
5. Challenges at the time of school admission.
6. Social, educational and financial challenges during child's academic career, thus far.

7. Infrastructure, support provided by school to child.
8. Quality and quantity of teacher's input in child's academics.
9. Input of Speech, Language Therapist in facilitating successful inclusive education.

The information received from the parents, deduced the following parameters:

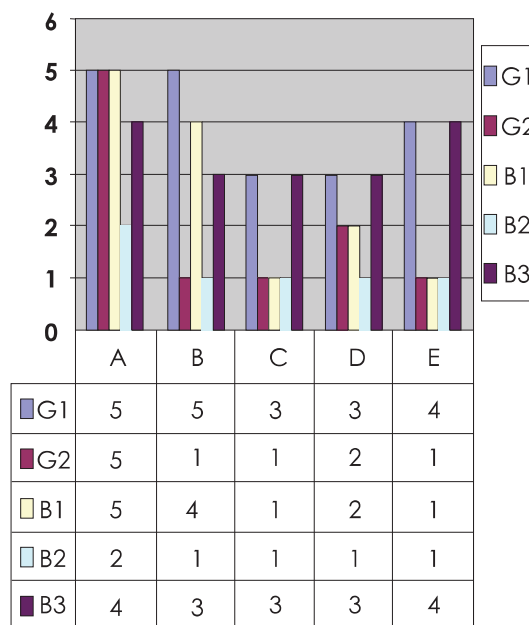
- A. Ease of admission into school
- B. School support in curricular needs of child
- C. Trained support personnel/teachers at school
- D. Peer relationships of child
- E. Extra facilities provided by the school

The above parameters were graded, in ascending order, on a continuum of 1-5. A minimum of 3 was required on the continuum to be given a positive grade indicating good, comfort levels, whilst achieving 1 and 2 were regarded as negative indicating high degree of difficulty.

RESULTS

Findings revealed the following (as illustrated in Table 2):

- 80% of the children got admission with ease.
- 60 % of the children received support from the school authorities, in catering to their curricular needs.
- 60% of the children had no trained support personnel/teachers at school, and negligible other facilities. They even had difficulty establishing peer relationships.



The above results could be summarized as follows: although getting into the school was less of a problem for a majority of these children, most of their parents faced difficulties in fulfilling their curricular needs, which primarily consisted of letter-sound recognition, sight reading of words, coping with the fast rate of class work. Two of the children amongst the 5 selected, had been hopping schools till they finally got admission into their current school (where they were enrolled at the time of this study), because the authorities in the previous schools had refused to budge from their policies thereby providing little or no support to the child⁶. It must be noted here that the cause of the problems arising in the mainstreaming school

setting, were not found to be disorder specific nor were they age or sex specific. However schools that had fewer children in each class provided more facilities, indicating that a larger teacher: child ratio was not conducive to admitting children with different abilities⁷.

DISCUSSION

There is a large socioeconomic divide in Pakistan. This study does not represent the larger group belonging to the middle/lower middle strata of society, who would not be able to access high tuition fee in the local schools following the Cambridge system of education. A small segment of our society is gradually becoming sensitive towards children with different abilities. However the lack of trained personnel in the areas of rehabilitation, education and remedial education is yet to increase, so that school successfully enroll and support all children with different abilities. In view of this the CSLHS has initiated a training program for teachers and support personnel working in schools with children having different needs, aiming to provide better academic instruction within and outside class. Since all the children in this group were currently receiving speech and language therapy; the therapists liaised with the teachers of the children sharing information as well as goals being targeted, to ensure enhanced learning and communicative development.

CONCLUSION

The greatest achievement of inclusive education is that children with different needs are all grouped together with typically developing children, who provide them with more stimulation, naturalistically, enhancing their self-esteem, and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All children regardless of their abilities have the right to education, and schools must provide a child with an environment favorable for all round development and learning⁸. Some recommendations for this are:

- In line with the principles of IE, our education system needs to be revamped with provision of flexible curricula in accordance with the child's potential, preparing them to become competent adults with a strong identity⁹.
- The new methodologies in education must be introduced in schools across all provinces in Pakistan¹⁰. Learning must not be forced on to the child but must be made interesting enough to encourage the child to learn himself.
- School teachers must be trained to work with all children, specifically with those having special needs.
- There should be a speech language therapist, an educational psychologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist and a remedial educationist within the school to work with atypically developing children, during school hours.

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