

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIAL AND REGULAR EDUCATION

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Introduction

In recent years, the education system has made significant strides in accommodating the needs of all learners, including those with special needs. Traditional approaches to education have shifted towards a more inclusive model, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and support systems to ensure the success of students with diverse needs. This chapter explores the concepts of special needs education, regular education, inclusive education, and their underlying collaborative efforts and support systems.

Special needs education and regular education are two interconnected educational frameworks that serve diverse student populations. Special needs education refers to the provision of tailored support and services to meet the unique learning needs of individuals with disabilities or developmental disorders. Regular education, also known as mainstream or general education, refers to the standard educational programs offered to all students within a community. In regular education classrooms, a diverse range of students with differing abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles learn together in inclusive environments (Hitchens, 2014). Teachers in regular education classrooms may provide differentiated instruction and adaptations to address the diverse needs of their students (Hardman et al., 2016). Regular education encompasses mainstream schooling, which typically caters to students without significant disabilities. Regular education focuses on providing instruction to students without disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The relationship between special needs education and regular education is crucial for creating inclusive educational environments that foster equality, respect, and advancement for all students. Regular education, often referred to as general education, is the traditional form of education delivered in mainstream schools. It encompasses classrooms where students without significant disabilities learn together in an inclusive environment. Regular education aims to provide a comprehensive curriculum that meets the needs of the majority of students.

Special needs education is a specialized approach that addresses the educational requirements of individuals with disabilities. This field encompasses a wide range of disabilities, including but not limited to cognitive, physical, sensory, and emotional impairments. The focus in special needs education lies in providing

individualized support, accommodations, and modifications to enable students to access the curriculum and reach their full potential. Special needs education provides tailored educational services to individuals who require extra support due to cognitive, physical, sensory, or emotional impairments. It aims to meet students' unique learning needs by providing appropriate accommodations, specialized curricula, and targeted interventions (Statistics Canada, 2018). Special needs education often takes place in specialized settings, such as resource rooms or specialized schools, with a focus on personalized instruction and individualized learning plans (Rey, 2016).

Inclusive education is an approach that involves the integration of students with disabilities or special needs into regular education classrooms, alongside their typically developing peers. It emphasizes equal opportunities, beneficial experiences, and equitable learning environments for all students (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education promotes the collaborative involvement of teachers, support staff, parents, and community members to address the diverse needs of students effectively (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

The thesis statement of this chapter is focused on an overview of the relationship between special needs education and regular education, differences between regular education and special needs education, the differences between the regular student and the student with special needs, the historical context of inclusive education, benefits of inclusive education, challenges of inclusive education, strategies in implementing inclusive education, implications of inclusive education, conclusions and ends with suggestions.

Relationships between Regular Education and Special Needs Education

The relationship between special needs education and regular education is an important aspect of inclusive education. When it comes to curriculum planning and pedagogy, both special needs education and regular education need to be considered to ensure that students with special needs receive appropriate support and access to the general curriculum.

1. Inclusive Education: Inclusive education aims to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities. It emphasizes the integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms, offering them the same educational experiences as their peers (UNESCO, 2009).

2. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs): The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legally binding document developed by a team of professionals, including the student's parents or caregivers, teachers, and special education experts. The IEP outlines the specific educational goals and accommodations required for a student with special needs to make progress in their education. It serves as a roadmap for the student's education, detailing the necessary supports, services, and modifications needed to ensure their success. Collaboration and communication between special education and regular education teachers are vital for the successful implementation of the IEP. Regular education and special needs

education intersect through the development and implementation of individualized education plans. IEPs are personalized plans that outline specific educational goals, accommodations, and support services for students with special needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

3. Pedagogy: Effective pedagogy in inclusive education involves employing diverse teaching strategies and instructional techniques to meet the diverse needs of students. Differentiated instruction is often used to personalize the learning experience for students with special needs while also catering to the needs of the general education students. Collaborative teaching and co-teaching models, where regular education and special education teachers work together in the classroom, can also play a crucial role in implementing inclusive pedagogy.

4. Collaboration and Co-teaching: Collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers is essential in supporting students with special needs in mainstream classrooms. Co-teaching models, such as team teaching or parallel teaching, facilitate collaboration and ensure that all students receive appropriate support (Friend & Cook, 2020).

5. Differentiated Instruction: In regular education, differentiated instruction is used to cater to diverse learning needs. It involves adapting teaching methods, materials, and assessments to meet the individual needs of students, including those with special needs (Tomlinson, 2017).

6. Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL is a framework that strengthens the relationship between regular and special needs education by promoting flexible teaching approaches that address various learning needs. UDL principles ensure that instructional materials and environments are accessible to all students (CAST, n.d.).

7. Response to Intervention (RTI): RTI is an approach that identifies students who may need additional support and intervention. It is a collaborative effort between regular and special education teachers to provide targeted assistance to struggling students before referring them for special education evaluations (Kovaleski et al., 2003).

8. Peer Support Programs: Regular education can play a vital role in fostering inclusive environments through peer support programs. These programs involve assigning peers or buddies to students with special needs, facilitating social interactions and promoting acceptance and understanding (Giangreco et al., 2010).

9. Transition Planning: Transition planning focuses on preparing students with special needs for life beyond school. Collaboration between regular and special education teams ensures that students receive appropriate guidance and support to transition into post-secondary education, employment, and independent living (Sitlington et al., 2007).

10. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): PBIS is a proactive approach that encourages positive behavior within a school environment. Collaboration between regular and special education teachers helps establish consistent expectations, provide targeted interventions, and create a supportive

learning environment for all students (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, 2010).

11. Parent Involvement and Advocacy: Building relationships between regular and special education also involves actively involving parents and caregivers. Collaboration between both sectors ensures that parents are informed about their child's education, goals, and progress, enabling them to advocate effectively for their child's needs (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2019).

Curriculum Planning

Inclusive curriculum planning involves designing a curriculum that addresses the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities. It is important to consider the individualized needs of students with special needs when developing the curriculum. This may involve making modifications or adaptations to the curriculum to accommodate their specific learning requirements while still ensuring learning outcomes are met. Collaborative planning among regular education teachers and special education teachers can be highly effective in designing inclusive curricula.

Assessment

Assessment is an essential component of both special needs and regular education. In the context of inclusive education, assessments should be designed to accommodate the diverse needs of students with special needs. This may involve utilizing alternative assessment methods that consider the individual strengths and challenges of these students. Collaborative assessment practices that involve both special education and regular education teachers can help ensure that assessments are fair, comprehensive, and inclusive.

Differences between Regular Education and Special Needs Education

1. Definition and Scope:

Regular Education: Regular education refers to the mainstream education system that caters to the needs of typically developing students without disabilities (Savolainen, 2014).

Special Needs Education: Special needs education, also known as special education or inclusive education, is a specialized system designed to meet the educational requirements of students with disabilities or special needs (Ajala & Mauer, 2018).

2. Learning Environment:

Regular Education: Regular education takes place in a general classroom setting where students with diverse abilities and backgrounds are taught together.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education can occur in various learning environments, including inclusion classrooms, resource rooms, or specialized schools, where students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations and support (Ademokun et al., 2019).

3. Individualized Instruction:

Regular Education: Instruction in regular education often follows a standardized curriculum and may not always consider individual student needs.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education focuses on providing individualized instruction based on students' specific disabilities, strengths, and learning styles (Ajao et al., 2017).

4. Curriculum Adaptation:

Regular Education: The regular education curriculum is usually uniform and designed for the average student without significant disabilities.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education involves adapting the curriculum to address the unique learning needs and abilities of students with disabilities (Ajala & Mauer, 2018).

5. Multidisciplinary Collaboration:

Regular Education: Regular education teachers primarily work independently, with limited collaboration between different disciplines.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education emphasizes collaborative efforts involving special education teachers, therapists, psychologists, and other professionals who collectively support students with disabilities (Oluremi, 2014).

6. Individualized Education Program (IEP):

Regular Education: In regular education, there is typically no formal IEP developed for students without disabilities.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education requires the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student, outlining their specific goals, interventions, and support services (Ajao et al., 2017).

7. Assessment and Evaluation:

Regular Education: Regular education often employs standardized assessments to evaluate student performance.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education uses a variety of assessment tools, including alternative and functional assessments, to accurately measure students' progress and determine appropriate interventions (Oluremi, 2014).

8. Assistive Technology:

Regular Education: The use of assistive technology in regular education is limited and primarily aims to enhance the learning experience for all students.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education extensively utilizes assistive technology, such as augmentative and alternative communication devices, specialized tools, and software, to help students with disabilities access and participate in the educational process (Ajala & Mauer, 2018).

9. Individualized Support Services:

Regular Education: Regular education typically offers minimal support services, such as limited counseling or tutoring.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education provides comprehensive support services tailored to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, including specialized therapies, counseling, and social skills training (Ademokun et al., 2019).

10. Parent Involvement:

Regular Education: Parent involvement in regular education varies, with fewer formal structures for collaboration and communication.

Special Needs Education: Special needs education recognizes the importance of active parent involvement and encourages collaborative partnerships between educators and parents to ensure the success of students with disabilities (Ajao et al., 2017).

Differences Between Regular Students and Special Needs Students

1. Learning Abilities: Regular students typically have average or above-average learning abilities, while special needs students have specific learning disabilities or differences (Ajeluorou, 2020).

2. Academic Achievement: Regular students may excel in various academic subjects, while special needs students may struggle to attain grade-level proficiency due to their disabilities (Ezike, 2017).

3. Instructional Approach: Regular students generally benefit from traditional teaching methods, whereas special needs students require individualized instruction and adaptations to meet their unique learning needs (Babalola, 2013).

4. Social Skills: Interactions and social skills development come naturally to most regular students, whereas special needs students often require targeted interventions to improve their socialization and communication skills (Ezike, 2017).

5. Classroom Accommodations: Regular students typically do not require significant classroom accommodations, while special needs students often need assistive devices, modified assignments, or specialized support (Ajake & Fatunde, 2019).

6. Behavior Management: Regular students usually follow general classroom rules, while special needs students may exhibit challenging behaviors and require specific behavior management strategies (Ozuru, 2019).

7. Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Regular students do not typically have an IEP, but special needs students have a legally mandated IEP that outlines their individualized goals and support services (Ajaku, 2020).

8. Teacher-Student Ratio: Regular students may be in larger classes with a lower teacher-student ratio, while special needs students might benefit from smaller class sizes and more individual attention (Ezike, 2017).

9. Access to Resources: Regular students often have access to standard school resources, while special needs students may require additional resources, such as specialized therapies and assistive technology (Ajaje & Fatote, 2021).

10. Transition Planning: Regular students typically transition smoothly between grade levels and into higher education or careers, while special needs students may require extra support and planning for transitions (Omolara & Ige, 2015).

The Historical Context of Inclusive Education

To discuss the historical context of inclusive education, it is crucial to understand the background and evolution of special education. Before the concept

of inclusive education emerged, there was a prevalent practice of segregating and isolating students with disabilities from their peers in separate special education settings (Salend & Duhaney, 2017). In the past, special needs education primarily followed a segregated model that separated students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers. However, in recent decades, there has been a significant shift toward inclusive education, which encourages the integration of students with disabilities into regular classrooms. This shift can be attributed to several factors, including a growing awareness of the rights of individuals with disabilities and advancements in educational policies.

During the mid-20th century, societal shifts and key legislation laid the foundation for inclusive education. The Civil Rights Movement and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States, for instance, contributed to recognizing equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities (Bateman & Bateman, 2019). These developments challenged the perceptions surrounding special education and led to the push for inclusive education.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

The implementation of inclusive education has been shown to have multiple significant benefits for special needs students and their non-disabled peers. They include:

1. **Academic Achievement:** Inclusive classrooms provide opportunities for students with diverse learning needs to receive individualized support, which can lead to improved academic achievement.
3. **Reduced Stigma:** Inclusive education challenges stereotypes and stigmatization by promoting a culture of acceptance, respect, and understanding for individuals with disabilities.
4. **Equal Opportunities:** Inclusive education ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, have equal access to education, fostering a more equitable society.
5. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Integrating special needs education into regular education promotes inclusivity by providing equal educational opportunities to students with diverse abilities and disabilities. It acknowledges that all students have the right to learn and grow together, regardless of their differences.
6. **Social and Emotional Development:** In integrated classrooms, special needs students have the opportunity to interact and build relationships with typically developing peers. This fosters empathy, respect, and understanding, benefiting the social and emotional development of all students involved.
7. **Academic Achievement:** Research has shown that integrating special needs education into regular education can lead to improved academic outcomes for students with disabilities. Inclusivity allows for customized instruction that caters to individual learning styles, enhancing engagement and knowledge acquisition.
8. **It fosters a sense of belonging and reducing marginalization, and promotes a more inclusive society.**

Challenges of Inclusive Education

While inclusive education offers numerous advantages, its successful implementation requires careful consideration of certain challenges. These challenges include:

1. **Lack of Resources:** Inclusive education often requires additional resources, such as specialized instructional materials, assistive technologies, and trained staff, to meet the diverse needs of students. Limited funding and resource allocation can pose a significant challenge.
2. **Teacher Preparedness:** Teachers may not always receive adequate training or support to effectively teach students with diverse learning needs. They may struggle to adapt instructional methods, differentiate materials, or provide appropriate accommodations.
3. **Negative Attitudes and Stigma:** Inclusive education challenges deep-rooted attitudes and social norms regarding disability and diversity. Negative perceptions and stereotypes can create barriers that hinder the full integration of students with disabilities, leading to exclusion and social isolation.
4. **Insufficient Collaboration:** Collaboration among educators, administrators, and related professionals is crucial for effective inclusive education. However, the lack of time, coordination, and communication can impede the collaboration necessary to meet the individual needs of students.
5. **Physical Accessibility:** Many schools lack physical infrastructure that is fully accessible to students with disabilities. Limited or inaccessible ramps, restrooms, classrooms, and playgrounds can limit students' participation and equal access to education.
6. **Curriculum Adaptation:** Inclusive education requires adapting the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students. However, modifying curriculum materials, assessments, and teaching strategies to accommodate students with differing abilities can be time-consuming and challenging.
7. **Bullying and Discrimination:** Students with disabilities may face higher rates of bullying and discrimination within mainstream educational settings. This can adversely affect their confidence, self-esteem, and overall educational experience.
8. **Parental Involvement:** Engaging parents and caregivers in the inclusive education process is essential. However, barriers such as language barriers, lack of awareness, and limited opportunities for involvement can hinder effective collaboration.
9. **Assessment and Evaluation:** Traditional assessment methods may not capture the full range of abilities and progress of students with disabilities. Developing alternative assessment strategies that account for a diverse range of learning styles and abilities is crucial for a fair and inclusive education system.
10. **Systemic Barriers:** Inclusive education requires systemic changes, including policy reforms, adequate funding, and community engagement. The lack of

political will, resistance to change, and limited awareness about the benefits of inclusion can create significant barriers.

11. Inclusive education may demand additional support services, specialized training for educators, and modifications to the physical environment.

Strategies in Implementing Inclusive Education

To overcome challenges associated with implementing inclusive education, several strategies have been proposed. These strategies include:

1. **Professional Development:** Provide ongoing professional development and training opportunities to teachers and school staff to enhance their understanding of diverse learning needs and effective inclusive practices. These programs further enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers in supporting students with diverse needs. Training opportunities on inclusive practices, assistive technologies, and behavior management strategies are essential for implementing inclusive education effectively.
2. **Collaboration and Communication:** Foster collaboration and communication among teachers, administrators, special educators, and support staff to ensure the coordinated delivery of inclusive education services. Collaboration between special education teachers, regular classroom teachers, support staff, and related professionals is crucial for the success of inclusive education. Regular communication and coordinated planning ensure that students with disabilities receive the necessary support.
3. **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):** IEPs are personalized plans that outline specific goals, accommodations, and modifications for students with disabilities. These plans facilitate a student-centered approach and guide educators in meeting the unique needs of each student. Hence, developing and implementing an individualized education plan that outline specific goals, accommodations, and support services for students with disabilities is very important for successful implementation of inclusive education.
4. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning to create inclusive instructional materials and environments that can be accessed by all students, regardless of ability.
5. **Parent and Community Involvement:** Encourage parental and community involvement through regular communication, workshops, and support groups to promote inclusivity and address concerns.
6. **Physical Accessibility:** Make necessary modifications to school infrastructures, such as ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and technology, to ensure physical accessibility for all students.
7. **Peer Support:** Promote peer support programs that encourage the development of positive relationships and inclusion among students with and without disabilities.

Implications for Inclusive Education:

The implications of inclusive education has two sides to it; the advantageous and the disadvantageous sides. The following are a combined itemization of the implications of inclusive education:

1. The provision of assistive technology and accommodation to help ameliorate a vast range of disabilities and help these disabled children transition smoothly from special school settings to inclusive educational system.
2. These children will experience displacement in the inclusive academic setting if proper Individualized Educational Plans intervention is not carried out.
3. Inclusive education will holistically add to the proper growth and development of both the special needs child and the normal child, as this broadens their scope on life and foster empathy.
4. It helps in the channeling of their abilities and strengths in various aspects of their lives.

Conclusion

The relationship between special needs education and regular education is evolving towards a more inclusive approach. Inclusive education has numerous benefits for both special needs students and their non-disabled peers. However, implementing inclusive education requires addressing various challenges through collaborative efforts and appropriate support systems. By working together, educators, administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders can create inclusive environments that promote the holistic development of all students. Hence, inclusive education involves collaborative efforts and support systems that allow students with special needs to thrive in regular education settings. By embracing inclusive practices, educators, support staff, parents, and policymakers can work together to create an inclusive learning environment that prioritizes the diverse needs of all students.

Therefore, the relationship between special needs education and regular education is vital to creating inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity, foster respect, and promote equal opportunities. Integration benefits both special needs students and their typically developing peers by promoting social and academic growth. While challenges exist, strategies such as IEPs, teamwork, and UDL can pave the way for successful inclusive education practices. By working together, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can create a brighter and more inclusive future for all students.

Suggestions

1. Federal and state ministries of education in collaboration with SUBEB and the Universal Basic Education should maintain collaborations with hospital managements to come up with policies, legislation and standardized

- blueprints and templates in order to assist in the identification, assessment and adequate educational interventions for these children.
2. Teachers and other professionals are urged to use visual aids, such as written instructions, diagrams, or drawings, to supplement verbal instructions. This can enhance comprehension and ensure that the individual fully understands the assessment tasks.
 3. The Federal and state ministries of education in collaboration with SUBEB and the Universal Basic Education should invest in the training and retraining of professionals who specialize in working with individuals with disabilities to ensure the educational inclusion process is comprehensive, fair, and all inclusive.
 4. Parents of children with disabilities should be educated and trained towards the effective and careful management of their children's condition, as well as the use, application and maintenance of assistive devices. They should be encouraged to take part in programs that will promote awareness, career guidance and employment opportunities for their children.
 5. The federal government, NGOs and SUBEB are urged to frequently participate in the funding and provision of standardized equipment for the smooth running of inclusive education.

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