

Perspectives of Parents Regarding Early Inclusive Education: A Preliminary Study

Priyadharshni, Kare Development Center, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Introduction: Inclusive education (IE) approaches to include Children with Special Needs (CWSN) among his/her typically developing peers in the same learning environment. Specifically IE provided during early childhood paves ways for remarkable progress in all their development domains. Following the legislations such as Right to education act (2009) and Right of persons with disability (2016) parents of CWSN from the age of four have been able to secure admission in regular schools. However certain factors continue to influence the success of IE such as access, appropriate curriculum, qualitative rehabilitation services and costs. Insights regarding these factors would help us to facilitate inclusion as well as advocate the future possibilities of IE services.

Objective: The main objective of this study was to document the perspectives and challenges faced by the parents in availing IE for their CWSN.

Method: Since this was a preliminary study 25 parents of CWSN below the age of six years were included. A questionnaire was framed with quality review of literature regarding parental views about IE. The questionnaire consisted of three sections comprising of questions pertaining to demographic data, about IE in terms of their mode of referral, type of inclusive services respectively and; fifteen statements in a 5 point Likert type rating scale to document information regarding their satisfaction of IE. Additional comments about IE were also obtained.

Results: The analysis with regard to mode of referral for admission revealed that out of 25 participants 20 were referred by NGO or organizations, 5 by another parent of CWSN which warrants more widespread awareness among the parents of CWSN regarding their right to access education. All 25 CWSN required classroom support, speech language therapy and occupational therapy; only 2 required physiotherapy services. 23 out of 25 participants had positive attitude towards inclusive education in terms of socialization and increase in communication behaviors. Access, limited use of modern technology, cost and curriculum were main concerns of parents of CWSN.

Conclusion: Along with early intervention early inclusion would improve the overall quality of life for CWSN. The IE approach could be further facilitated by addressing these concerns with availability of compulsory IE in the all government primary schools and use of updated high technology aids. Further study with more number of participants and school teachers would provide more insights to validate the findings.