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### Development of Self Esteem among Special Children: A Step forward to Inclusive Education

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#### Abstract

*The whole educational world currently is faced with the formidable task of achieving the goal of Inclusive Education. For fulfilling the commitment towards the complete inclusion of the children with special needs or differently abled students in mainstream education, new trends of teaching-learning methods gradually are being introduced and infrastructural changes also have been started to incorporate with the existing set up. Though it is far reaching aspired goal, but those who are getting the facilities of special education majority of them leave their study in mid-way. Researchers observed that one of the major causes behind it is low self-esteem among the special children. This paper intends to study the nature of low esteem among special children and the teaching learning strategies to accelerate the self-esteem among them to make inclusive education successful.*

**Key words :** *Inclusive Education, Self Esteem etc.*

#### INTRODUCTION

##### A. Inclusive Education

The last few decades one of the most discussed and significant aspiration in world of education is Inclusive Education. UNESCO (1994) promotes Inclusive Education system that removes the barriers limiting the participation and achievement of all learners, respect diverse needs, abilities and characteristics and that eliminate all forms of discrimination in the learning environment. UNESCO pays special attention to the Children with special needs. University of Washington, Centre for Teaching and Learning suggested five core practices to make educational system inclusive in nature-a) Designing course with inclusivity in mind b) Maximizing the varied educational background and personal experiences of students c) Creating a respectful and productive learning environment d) Assessing inclusive teaching and e) Reflecting on teaching practices to support professional growth. Though Inclusive Education system still a far reaching reality but the existing system have been assimilating changes in the educational institutions. Passing through this journey a significant problem has been

noticed by the researchers that those special children are getting the opportunity of inclusive classroom; amongst them also dropout rate is very high. Analysing the scenario some causes is observed. One of the major and significant predominant is low Self Esteem among the differently abled students.

##### B. Self Esteem

Self-esteem is a judgement about one's self-worth, one's competence and value, based upon the process of conceptualising and gathering information about oneself and one's experiences (Johnson, 1979). Self-esteem has a prominent role in the mental health and personality balance.

This evaluation is believed to be relevant to the individual's optional adjustment and functioning.

Self-esteem with reference to disability can be defined as a disabled person evaluating his/her capacity to perform in the society. . Low self-esteem unsettles human's balance and vitality and negatively influences the efficacy, efficiency learning and creativity of physically disabled humans. It is characterized by the feeling of inadequate, guilt, shyness, social inhibition,

helplessness, masked hospitality, withdrawal, complainer, tendency to downgrade others, reduced ability, accepting unfavourable assessment as accurate, vulnerability and interpersonal problem (Robson, 1988). Woolfolk(1995) defined self-esteem as our evaluation of our own self-concept or to be more specific, the value that each of us places on our own abilities and behaviours. The developing self-esteem of an individual is influenced by parents and other family members in the early years and by friends, teachers and schoolmates as the child continues to grow. For the differently abled students, these factors usually play a very negative role and develop a very low esteem within them. The major objective of this study is to discuss some teaching-learning strategies which might be helpful to develop positive self-esteem among the differently abled students.

#### LOW SELF-ESTEEM AMONG DIFFERENTLY ABLED STUDENTS

Many researches pointed out the causes and nature of existence of low esteem among differently abled students. Our self-esteem develops from our experiences and relations from birth. Negative experiences and troubled relationships lower it while good experiences and strong bonds raise it. Hence the foundation of self-esteem is laid in the family at infancy. As a child, parents are the biggest influence on self-esteem. Children who are consistently criticized, berated, yelled at or beaten by a parent quickly learn they are worthless. If children are continually ignored, teased or ridiculed at home or in school or if they are expected to be perfect all the time in order to be accepted at home or in school, they will eventually develop a poor self-image (Obidigbo, 2006). Hence, being harshly criticized, being yelled at or beaten, being ignored or teased, being expected to be perfect all the time, or having experiences of several failures such as in the school or sports will result in low self-esteem or self-image. These all above mentioned factors are very much present in the lives of the differently able students. From the day of identification of any kind of disability first the parents and then the whole society make them the subject of criticism, intolerance or sympathy which gradually low down their self-esteem. Negative communication such as scowling, shouting or having angry facial expressions can make a child feel worthless, unloved and fragile, which can have negative effects on their self-esteem (Colwell and O'Conner ,2003). Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied and seek social acceptance from their peers even though they are rejected. The social environment for adolescents with disabilities can be full social emptiness with very few social relationships and little to no contact with others. This can cause behavioural problems and episodes of anger, which can cause further isolation (Kroese & Reed, 2005). People with disabilities remain an oppressed and vulnerable group in today's society. Evidence has shown those with disability experience a tremendous amount of physical abuse that may lead into other forms of abus. "There is a growing awareness and evidence that people with learning disabilities are at greater risk for abuse than the general population. The results of oppression may factor as lack of opportunities to make proper choices, little control over their lives being

viewed negatively and with poor communication skills" (Davies & Jenkins, 2004). Heydari et al. (2009) showed the difference of Self Esteem between disabled and normal students. They found that Self Esteem and life satisfaction (LS) is lower in physically disabled people than in normal people.

#### TEACHING LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATION OF SELF-ESTEEM AMONG DIFFERENTLY ABLED STUDENTS

##### A. Cooperative learning

It is a peer-mediated, instructional arrangement: in which small groups or teams of students work together to achieve team success in a manner that promotes the students responsibility for their own learning as well as the learning of others. (Mercer & Mercer, 1998).

It includes four main approaches: The conceptual approach, the structural approach, the student-team learning approach and the curricular approach (Putman, 1998). In Conceptual Approach Learning Together Model is worth mentioning. This is developed by Johnson and Johnson. The proposed elements are positive interdependence, individual accountability, face to face interaction, cooperative skill training and group processing (putman 1998). Structural Approach: was developed by Kagan ( 1990) .His model contains four basic principles- Positive interdependence Individual Accountability, Equal Participation and Simultaneous Interaction. Equal Participation denotes equal chance for every student in participation group activities, so that they can feel themselves an important factor of the group. For enhancement of Simulations Interaction teacher should make sure that in every moment students must get scope to make them involved actively in learning process. Salvin (1995) developed the student learning Method. Three focused areas of this approach is team focused areas of this approach is- team rewards, individual accountability and equal approaches for success. Curricular Approach was also designed by Salvin and the colleagues. It helps to support the classroom instruction. With the help of this method differently abled students begin to receive positive attention from peers and teachers since cooperative reduces off-task and disruptive behaviors. This strategy produces social skills and role model behavior in students (Dietrich, 2005). Cooperative learning develops self-confidence, self-respect, social responsibility and the feeling of social inclusion among the students. This learning method accelerates the attitude of social acceptance of learners with special needs among the other children of the regular classroom. It makes differently abled students feel they are not alone, it boosts their self-esteem. In the behavioral view, cooperative learning is a form of group contingencies, because it rewards students on the basis of the performance of their group.

##### B. Mixed-Ability Grouping

Mixed Ability Grouping strategy seems to be effective for better achievement of the differently abled students. It means putting them within some students of above average and average students in a group. On cognitive level research indicates that the interaction with children with different abilities and maturity levels and experiences can consequently contribute to cognitive

restructuring. If our aim is to motivate all students in a mixed-ability setting, then providing students with open-ended tasks is only one part of the equation. We also need to make sure that we really pay attention to the ideas and opinions that are expressed by the students, not just the language that is used to express them. A thoughtful response to a student's comment is one of the clearest ways to demonstrate respect, which in turn can boost self-esteem and enhance motivation.

### C. Participatory Learning

Besides, another important intervention method is proposed by the researchers is participatory learning method. It is a form of classroom organization which utilizes heterogeneous dependent group who actively participate in the learning tasks under the guidance of subject teacher (Duze, 2010). Sinclair (2004) has expressed that participation is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. She also suggested that the key elements of participation are children's involvement in power issues such as decision making, nature of the participatory activity and practices, characteristics of the children involved and the level of participation. It is important to respect and recognize children's voice and empower their ideas to support them to have impact on their own lives (Sinclair, 2004). In Activity Based Learning every child who passes the first and second standard will definitely know how to read and write. Not only in the academic progress this learning process succeeded also in the improvement of the social development skill, because all the students got opportunity to work together which leads to the development of social interaction skill. This provides an extra advantage for the special children who basically remain isolated in the classroom and usually get less scope to interact with the other classmates and teachers also. Participatory learning is significantly beneficial to boost up the confidence level among them. When teacher makes engage their students in activity based learning all the senses of the students are active. Psychology treats the learners as active investigator of their environment. Pine's study found (as cited in Awasthi, 2014), in activity based learning learners willingly internalise and implement the concepts relevant to their needs with enthusiasm.

### D. Affective Teaching

Kususanto et al. (2010, p. 708) found that teachers' perceived ideas of learners could manifest through behavior and be detected by learners, which in turns affect learners' self-esteem. A longitudinal research done by Reddy et al. (2003, p. 119) indicated that teachers' support and involvement could result in learners' higher self-esteem. According to Mruk (2013), the teaching conduction, including teaching approaches, activities, and classroom management, all affects learners' self esteem. Additionally, he mentioned the power of teacher being a role model, and providing constant support would contribute to a positive self-perception. What's more, Burns (1982) concluded that teacher's self-concept correlates with children's self-concept. He explained, teachers who have a positive view of themselves personally and professionally show the propensity for believing in pupils' capacity and creating a supportive classroom environment, leading to pupils' high self-esteem. By activating the affective domain, teachers tried to raise

the level of curiosity and interest in learning. When the uniqueness and dignity of each student are recognized, it opens the growth forces within the individual for self-fulfilling pursuits.

### CONCLUSION

From the above mentioned brief study it can be summed up that for successful inclusive education first step will be to study the entry level behavior of differently abled student and to make them fully involve in the teaching learning process by developing their confidence level on themselves and on others attached with their lives. This confidence only can be developed if they value themselves and stop any negative thinking. It has been observed from the above mentioned research works for building up the positive self-esteem among the differently abled students these teaching learning strategies have proved the efficacy. Once these special children will possess the positive self-esteem the wheel of inclusive education will start to run effectively.

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