



Teacher and Parent Collaboration in Supporting Inclusive Education: A Qualitative Approach in Inclusive Schools

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Abstract

The success of inclusive education, which aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, relies heavily on the collaboration between teachers and parents. This study explores the dynamics of teacher-parent collaboration within inclusive schools using a qualitative approach. The research examines how effective communication, mutual understanding, and active participation between teachers and parents contribute to creating a supportive learning environment for students with diverse needs. Through in-depth observations in several schools, the study identifies key factors that facilitate or hinder effective collaboration. It reveals that strong teacher-parent partnerships can significantly enhance the academic and social development of students with special needs. However, challenges such as differing perspectives on educational approaches, time constraints, and limited knowledge of inclusive education principles often impede this collaboration. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers and parents, as well as the implementation of effective communication strategies, to overcome these barriers. By fostering a collaborative culture, inclusive schools can better support the individual needs of all students, ensuring that each child reaches their full potential within an inclusive educational setting. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how collaborative practices in education can be optimized to promote inclusivity and equity in schools.

Keywords: *Teacher; Parents; Inclusive Schools*

Introduction

Education is an approach that emphasizes providing equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. The main principle of inclusive education is to integrate students with a wide range of abilities into a similar learning environment, where each student will receive support and adjustments according to individual needs. In this context, collaboration between teachers and parents will be a mutually supportive factor in realizing effective inclusive education (Fyelling & Sandvin, 1999).

Teachers are educators who are at the forefront of playing an important role in designing or implementing inclusive teaching strategies (Voltz et al, 2010). They are required to be able to identify

students' special needs, adapt the curriculum and establish diverse teaching methods to ensure all students can learn more optimally. On the other hand, parents are important partners in inclusive education as they have in-depth knowledge of their children's needs and potential. Parents' affective participation in the education process allows for effective communication, which is essential in understanding and meeting the needs of the whole student. Collaboration between teachers and parents in inclusive education is not only beneficial for students with special needs, but also for all students in the classroom. Through close collaboration, teachers can gain valuable insights from parents on effective strategies at home, while parents can also learn how to better encourage their child's learning at home. In addition, this collaboration will also help create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, where every student feels valued and supported.

While the importance of collaboration is widely recognized, there can still be many challenges in its implementation. Some of these include lack of time and resources, differences in perceptions and expectations between teachers and parents, and communication barriers. Therefore, this research will aim to explore how collaboration between teachers and parents can support inclusive education in inclusive schools, focusing on qualitative research. Through a desk-based approach, the research will identify effective collaborative practices, challenges faced and solutions that can be applied to improve this collaboration. This research will provide insights into the dynamics of collaboration between teachers and parents in the context of inclusive education and offer practical recommendations for improving the effectiveness of this collaboration. Thus, the results of this research will contribute to improving the quality of inclusive education in schools so that all students can learn and develop in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Research Methods

This research used a qualitative approach with the literature study method to explore the collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting inclusive education in inclusive schools. The desk study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to collect and analyze information from a variety of relevant written sources, including books, journal articles, research reports and policy documents. The data sources in this study include literature available from various academic databases, libraries and official publications from educational institutions and organizations that focus on inclusive education. The data sources used include textbooks and monographs that discuss the theory and practice of inclusive education, journal articles that have been published in accredited journals that discuss collaboration between teachers and parents in the context of inclusive education. Data were collected through a systematic literature search. This process involved several steps, starting with the identification of keywords relevant to the research topic, such as "inclusive education," "teacher-parent collaboration," "inclusive education management," and "curriculum adaptation." These keywords were then used to search the literature. These keywords were then used to search for literature in various academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, SpringerLink, and ScienceDirect, as well as searches in university libraries and research institutions. After the search, relevant literature was selected based on the title, abstract, and content of the article, focusing only on literature that had direct relevance to the research topic. Selected documents were then collected and organized for analysis.

The triangulation technique was used as a data validation tool to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings (Thurmond, 2001). In the context of a literature study, triangulation is done by combining data from different sources and types of literature. For example, findings from journal articles discussing collaboration practices in a particular country were compared with research reports from other countries and relevant international policies. If the findings from these different sources are consistent, then the research results are considered valid and trustworthy. This technique also helped identify differences or inconsistencies in the literature which were then further analyzed to gain a deeper understanding. The data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method.

Discussion and Results

A. Perceptions and Understanding of Inclusive Education

The understanding of the concept of inclusive education among teachers and parents often varies significantly, which can affect how their collaboration takes place in supporting students with special needs. Teachers, as education professionals, can usually have a fairly deep and theoretical understanding of inclusive education in their environment. They may see it as an approach that seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of ability or disability, have equal access to quality education. For each teacher, inclusive education involves modifications to the curriculum, the use of highly diverse teaching methods and furthermore the implementation of more adaptive classroom management strategies that address the individual needs of each student. Teachers also tend to view inclusive education as a way to build an educational environment that accepts and respects differences, which in turn stimulates empathy, tolerance and cooperation among students.

On the other hand, parents also have a more practical and emotional understanding of how inclusive education works, often influenced by their personal experiences in assisting their children with special needs (Tukov, 2008). For many parents, inclusive education is about providing fairer and more equal opportunities for their children to get an education and thrive in a more mainstream school environment. They also expect their children to be able to interact with their peers without discrimination and get the support they need to be more successful academically and socially. But some parents may also feel that schools or teachers are not adequately prepared or trained to handle their children's special needs. These concerns would include a lack of resources, support, individual attention needed to support their children's optimal learning.

Differences in perception can also be seen in the goals or benefits of inclusive education. Teachers often see the purpose of inclusive education in the broader context of creating a fair and equal education system for all students. They emphasize the longer-term benefits, such as increased awareness and social acceptance of differences, and better development of social and emotional skills among all students. On the other hand, parents may focus more on the immediate benefits for their own children, such as the ability to learn alongside peers, access to an equitable curriculum, and adequate support to achieve their academic potential. Parents may also be more concerned about the practical challenges their children may face in an inclusive environment, such as social stigma, bullying, or lack of individualized attention from teachers.

When these differences in perception are not properly managed, tensions or miscommunication between teachers and parents can arise, which in turn can hinder their collaborative efforts in supporting more inclusive research. Therefore, it is important to create an open and constructive dialog between teachers and parents, where both parties can share their views, concerns and expectations. Thus, they can work together to find the best solution to meet the needs of all parties, especially students with special needs. This alignment of understanding and expectations goes a long way in creating a more inclusive, supportive and effective learning environment for all students.

B. Forms of Teacher-Parent Collaboration

Collaboration between teachers and parents in an inclusive school context plays a key role in creating a learning environment that supports students' special needs. Collaboration models or mechanisms that are implemented generally involve various forms of interaction and cooperation designed to ensure that each student gets the necessary support in achieving his or her maximum potential. One such model is the Individualized Education Program (IEP), where a teacher, parents, and often students, work together to design a specific education plan for students with special needs. The IEP also includes learning objectives, teaching strategies, or curriculum adaptations needed to ensure that each student can fully participate in all classroom activities.

The frequency or type of interaction between teachers and parents will also vary depending on the needs of the student or the policies of each school. Regular meetings will often be held, both

monthly and per semester, where teachers and parents can discuss student progress, challenges, and adjust learning strategies if needed. In addition, communication using digital media such as email, messaging apps, or e-learning platforms is becoming increasingly important in keeping teachers and parents connected. The use of digital media enables parents to get immediate updates on their child's progress and provide real-time feedback to teachers. Apart from formal meetings, joint school activities such as workshops, seminars or special events involving parents are also effective forms of interaction. Such activities not only strengthen the relationship between teachers and parents but also build a more supportive community for inclusivity in schools.

In this collaboration, the roles of each party should be clear and complementary. Teachers, with their professional expertise, are responsible for designing and implementing inclusive learning strategies, including adjustments to the curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation that will suit the special needs of students. They are also in charge of monitoring students' progress and providing accurate reports to parents. On the other hand, parents function as the main support at home, ensuring that any strategies implemented at school are also supported in the home environment. Parents can provide valuable insights into the needs and characteristics of their children, which help teachers tailor their approach. They can also play a role in encouraging children's involvement in school activities and ensuring that children feel supported both at home and at school. Good and effective collaboration between teachers and parents not only improves student learning outcomes, but also creates a more inclusive and supportive environment where every student, regardless of their special needs, can thrive.

C. Constraints and Challenges in Collaboration

Collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting inclusive education often faces a variety of obstacles and challenges that can affect its effectiveness (Friend et al, 2010). Teachers, reflecting their education and training backgrounds, may have a more technical and theoretical view of inclusive approaches, whereas parents often approach the issue from a more emotional and practical perspective, especially when it comes to the specific needs of their individual children. This difference in views can lead to disagreements about the most effective strategies or even conflict if one party feels that their needs are not being met or understood.

Information gaps can also be a significant barrier to collaboration as not all parents have sufficient access to information about their children's special needs, the latest developments in inclusive education or their rights in the education system. On the other hand, teachers may also lack in-depth information about the student's family background and home environment, which is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs. This information gap often leads to miscommunication or lack of coordination in designing or implementing effective education plans.

Time and commitment are also important challenges. Teachers generally face a heavy workload with the responsibility of managing a multicultural class and developing differentiated learning plans. This can limit the time available to communicate effectively and regularly with parents. On the other hand, parents may also face difficulties in making time to participate more actively in school activities, especially if they work full-time or have other responsibilities that take up their time. Not being able to allocate enough time for regular meetings, consultations or joint school activities can reduce the effectiveness of teacher-parent collaboration.

In addition, the commitment and level of involvement of each party can vary greatly. Some parents may be highly involved and proactive in supporting their children's education, while others may feel uncomfortable about how best to support their children at school, or even feel that they have no voice in their child's educational process. Teachers, on the other hand, may experience burnout or resource constraints that reduce their ability to collaborate effectively with parents. In some cases, cultural or language differences can also be a barrier, especially in more multicultural communities where teachers and parents have different cultural backgrounds and different ways of communicating.

All in all, these challenges call for a more flexible and creative approach to building more effective collaboration. It also requires a more conscious effort on both sides to understand and overcome barriers through open dialogue, improved access to information and a shared commitment to contribute more actively to the inclusive education process. By addressing these challenges, collaboration between teachers and parents can be enhanced, creating a more inclusive educational environment that supports the optimal development of students with special needs.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The conclusion of this article confirms the importance of era relationships and harmonious cooperation between teachers and parents in realizing effective inclusive education. Inclusive education, which aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, requires concerted efforts from the various parties involved in the education process. Teachers play a profound role by providing an adaptive and supportive learning environment, while parents have an important role in understanding their children's needs at home. This collaboration includes aspects such as open and honest communication, understanding of the learning approaches and strategies used at school, and active participation in planning and evaluating student development.

This research has used a qualitative approach in exploring the dynamics between teachers and parents in inclusive schools. The results show that effective collaboration can provide significant support for students with special needs to reach their full potential within the school environment. In addition, this collaboration will also help in reducing the barriers that students may face, both academically and socially. However, this study also identified some challenges in establishing collaboration between teachers and parents, such as different views on educational approaches, time constraints in communication and a lack of understanding of the principles of inclusive education. Therefore, additional efforts, such as training teachers and parents and developing more effective communication mechanisms, are needed to overcome these challenges. Overall, the conclusion of this article is that strong or coordinated collaboration between teachers and parents is a key factor in the success of inclusive education. By working together, both parties can create an inclusive and supportive educational environment that not only accommodates the needs of students with special needs, but also encourages all students to learn and develop in an inclusive atmosphere that values diversity.

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