

Developing Inclusive Education for Autistic Children: The Case of Laval School in Kenitra City

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Abstract

Inclusive Education provides a secure learning environment for disabled students. Inclusive education is a pressing issue. In a country like Morocco, where there has been a population growth, inclusive education plays an important role. Children with autism are prevalent in Morocco. Motivating children to learn and educate is a significant problem for us. As a result, we must enhance the educational system. We must prepare and educate our teachers for the upcoming difficulties of inclusive education. When children with and without disabilities participate and study in the same courses, this is referred to as inclusive education. According to research, when a disabled child attends courses with classmates who do not have disabilities, positive things happen. Inclusion is about giving children the support they need to learn and engage in meaningful ways. Help from friends or teachers may be quite beneficial at times. In recent decades, the inclusion of students with special educational needs in these institutions has been the topic of continuing research and discussion. The notion of inclusion is concerned with the provision of education throughout the student environment. As a result, the study's goal is to investigate the integration of autistic children into regular school classes. More particularly, the role of teaching assistants in the integration of students with Autism will be investigated. The case involved two female teaching assistants, with their experience of incorporating children with autism in inclusive schools being a consideration. To examine these perspectives, a qualitative method was employed, with class observation, interviews, and reporting serving as data collecting tools. The findings of the study suggest that teachers have an important role in the inclusion of children with autism in Laval inclusive school. They think that inclusion in an inclusive school will benefit them not just in terms of socializing but also in terms of learning.

Key Words: Inclusive education, autism, disabilities, teaching assistants, Laval school

Introduction

Human rights, social justice, and equitable principles are at the heart of inclusive education. In order for Morocco to achieve inclusive education, the whole education system must be reformed. In lieu of inclusive education, the Moroccan government achieved headway in integrating students with autism. However, such approach lacks the central tenet of inclusive education, which is unconditional acceptance. For the sake of this study, inclusive education is providing equal education and social opportunities to all students in schools, regardless of their differences.

Laval School Background

Laval School is a private school in Kenitra city. It is an educational institution. It comprises of kindergarten, primary school, and middle school. It is located in the ouest of Bir Rami in Kenitra city. The creation date of the institution was in 2000. The head of the school is a female. Laval is an inclusive school. It integrates students with learning disorders and autism. Specifically, Laval school deals mostly with dyslexic and autistic students. The disabled students study with their non-disabled peers in the same classroom with the same teacher. But, the school provides the teaching assistants only for autistic students besides the regular teacher in the same classroom.

Objectives and Scope of the Study

The goal of this study is to discover how Laval Primary School in Kenitra promotes inclusive education for students with autism. To do this, the researcher studied the extent to which teaching assistants' aid in the academic and social inclusion of autistic learners. This study is only being done in Kenitra's urban school. As a result, the results may not be generalizable. To obtain data, the study relied more on closed-ended instructor interviews, class observation, and reporting.

Research Questions

1. What kind of assistance do these autistic students desire?
2. What are the responsibilities of teaching assistants in Laval inclusive school?

Literature Review

According to Paraskevi (2021), the clinical picture of autism is not homogeneous, as it ranges from lesser to more severe types. Autistic people have not developed areas such as communication, social connections, hobbies, and activities. Children with autism have a lack of emotional and social reciprocity from a young age, which appears as a lack of eye contact, a lack of interest in others, and trouble interpreting others' feelings and expressions. The Swiss doctor Bleuler coined the term autism in 1911. Leo Kanner, a child psychiatrist in America, identified the tremendous difficulties of communication and the appearance of indifference for what is going on in the larger social environment in 1943. Lorna Wing first mentioned autistic individuals and the difficulties they have with socializing, communication, and creativity in 1976 (Paraskevi, 2021). Autism affects around 60 children per 10,000 under the age of eight, with 10 - 30% of those affected having autism and other pervasive developmental problems. Boys are three to four times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with autism, and 2 to 5 out of every 100 children born as twins acquire autism (cited in Paraskevi, 2021). In the past, students with disabilities had limited chance of learning in public school. According to Smith et al. (2014: 288), "autism spectrum disorders are pervasive developmental disorders that primarily affect social interactions, language, and behaviour". Primarily, students with autism, in particular, require more attention from teachers than normal students. Manisah et al. argued that in the previous two decades, western nations have accepted the inclusion of autistic children in regular schools based on four distinct models of inclusion, namely: 1) in and out, 2) two-teachers, 3) full inclusion, and 4) rejection of inclusion (as cited in Manisah, Ramlee and Zalizan, 2006). Some teachers stated in the research that the 'in and out' approach might assist students with disabilities by allowing them to experience the two worlds, where they receive special instruction in regular learning situations as well as engage with their classmates in normal settings. The full inclusion paradigm is seen to be the most advantageous to everyone. Vygotsky developed two theories: the broad cultural-historical theory of human development and the theory of disontogenesis. The theory of dysontogenesis was sometimes referred to as the theory of distorted development (Daniels, Cole & Wertsch, 2007). This theory demonstrates a positive social perspective on disabled children. For example, rather than focusing on the biological reasons of autism, an autistic child's interaction with other people should be prioritized.

Methodology

This qualitative research focused on autistic learners' active, meaningful participation and engagement in their learning. As a unit of analysis, Laval School demonstrated how urban general education schools foster inclusiveness. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose teaching assistants who have integrated autistic learners. For data gathering, the researcher employed class observation, reporting, and interviews with an emphasis on demographic and inclusive education methods. Years of experience were included in the demographic data.

I. The Case of Teaching Assistant Hajar

Rayan attends Laval School in Kenitra City. He is fourteen years old. He attends middle school. He is a child who is autistic. Rayan is doing well at school, according to his female teaching assistant. In terms of his abilities, Rayan is regarded as a mathematical genius. He possesses a high level of mathematical intelligence. Rayan excels in only two subjects: math and French. In terms of shortcomings, he is unable to tackle complicated issues. He has trouble remembering things by heart. Rayan's focus is easily broken, which means he cannot keep up with his instructor or his non-disabled peers. He needs guidance from the teaching assistant. Half of the day is spent studying at Laval, while the other half is spent learning at the Learning Disorder Center in Siyad, Kenitra city. The Learning Disorder Center welcomes disabled children, including those with Down syndrome, autism,

speech problems, ADHD, and learning disabilities. In the center, the teaching assistant begins a condensed review of the teachings with Rayan. Rayan's favorite subjects are strongly emphasized by the teaching assistant. Rayan, for example, enjoys arithmetic and French language. This would not prevent the teaching assistant from explaining other school subjects to Rayan in order for him to stay up with other students' courses and sit for adapted examinations. Even customized tests need guidance on the side of the students. Rayan exhibits some aggressive conduct as a result of the stress of the study from time to time. In the Learning Disorder Center, the autistic child needs a variety of activities such as painting, sports practice, and game play. The latter features a sports room where students may unwind after a long day of studying. Disabled children participate in a variety of activities, including basketball, volleyball, rope games, and fitness. These sports assist autistic children in developing healthy body building, self-confidence, self-image, and self-esteem. Rayan exhibits various odd actions at Laval school, such as playing with his fingers, striking his head with the table, playing with the chair, and playing with his lips. He also uses certain nonsensical phrases, prompting his teaching assistant to inquire about the origins of such terms. As a response, he responds, "I am sorry." He is such a forgiving youngster that he continues expressing sorry whenever the teaching assistant questions him about a certain conduct. Rayan is a scaredy-cat. This, according to his teaching assistant, may be explained by his familial background. Rayan has a strong memory in that he associates the words with the persons. He has a one-of-a-kind anecdote about his Islamic teacher. One time, a female Islamic instructor informed him that if he did well in school, he would be given some orange juice. As a result, Rayan always linked the Islamic teacher with orange juice. This can be interpreted psychologically, particularly in the case of autistic youngsters. Most of the time, autistic youngsters direct their focus and attention to the things that interest them. Rayan's communication abilities are restricted in the sense that he can only react with yes or no, without explaining his responses. This might be viewed as Rayan's lack of analytical and logical abilities. Rayan occasionally provides extraneous answers that have nothing to do with the queries. This might be regarded as a lack of communication and logical abilities in the youngster. When working with autistic children, the psychologist should pay special attention to the child's communication, interests, self-confidence, and self-esteem, especially throughout puberty. This phase is distinguished by an unstable personality, emotionality, and adaptability. Teens may exhibit surprising behavior; this is connected to the teenagers' self-esteem, whether positive or bad. One should be prepared for the unexpected. Rayan's situation as a teenager necessitates that Rayan exhibits nearly identical conduct to other teens. Rayan is accepted as he is by Laval School, which means that he is accepted as he is. The school provides all of the necessary facilities and accommodations for autistic youngsters. The autistic child must be welcomed and integrated into society. He can be productive if he is integrated into society. Unlike special education institutions, the Laval inclusive school accepts disabled students regardless of their impairment. It argues that ability exists inside disability. Laval School embraces disabled students with fairness and equal chances in the cause of compassion. It treats disabled pupils the same as non-disabled students, encouraging the autistic child to believe in himself and his surroundings.

II. The Case of Teaching Assistant Badiia

Badiia works as a teaching assistant at Laval Elementary School. She has been educating autistic youngsters for over ten years. She claimed that the autistic child has numerous issues in the following areas:

1. Difficulty in concentration
2. Discipline problems
3. Problems in reading and writing
4. Problem in understanding
5. Problems in complex and indirect questions
6. Problems in dealing with comprehension questions
7. Concentration issues for a short period of time, and occasionally for a lengthy period of time

It is critical to provide regular help to the autistic child for every activity he completes or answer he provides during class participation, especially when performing exercises and lessons alongside his non-disabled peers. Throughout the academic year, the autistic child must be monitored by a teaching assistant who will assess his behavior and work. He enjoys solitude and loneliness in his own environment. Courses and activities may fatigue and bore the autistic child. This might hinder his understanding and ability to follow the program. As a

result, he needs rest from time to time. If the teaching assistant wanted to leave him alone, she did so gradually so as not to upset his sensitive emotional side. The autistic youngster may consider the teaching assistant to be an essential part of his life; without her, he would be unable to complete his education. However, there are times when it is necessary to leave him alone, sit away from him, and let him behave himself. This was done by the teaching assistant to assess if he was self-sufficient. The autistic youngster may feel bored in the company of his teaching assistant if he is not accompanied by his peers. Because he takes an adapted exam and his exam paper is not the same as the other papers, the autistic youngster asks a lot of questions, especially on test days. He raises a variety of questions, such, "Why is my exam paper different from the others?" Why am I taking exams that have been altered? We can easily see from this that there is a set of questions that the teaching assistant should answer without disclosing his shortcomings. The autistic child, in reality, is intelligent, honest, and outgoing. He has hobbies and interests. We must encourage him so that he may attain his full potential and follow his aspirations, while also allowing him to express himself and his individuality.

Results and Discussion

Along with the general education instructor, the two female teaching assistants were individually educating and supporting the students with autism in the inclusive class. One of them held a B.A. diploma, while the other held an education degree. During the COVID-19 epidemic, there was one learner with autism in each class of 16 to 20 students. The following are the themes that were emerged from the interviews with the two teaching assistants:

1. Classroom Instruction

The two teaching assistants reported using several instructional techniques to promote inclusive education. They also utilized real-life examples. They put autistic students through the same learning activities as their peers.

2. Learner Engagement

The two female teaching assistants developed lesson plans for autistic pupils. They collaborate with the general education instructor to improve learning. Because they may be weak in skills, such variety is appropriate.

3. Social Acceptance

Respect, tolerance, understanding, and support were noted by the teaching assistants among the learners with autism and their non-disabled classmates. It is strongly encouraged to form friendships, play, and engage with people.

Conclusion

Inclusive Education offers disabled students with a safe learning environment. Hundreds of children are missing school; we should improve the educational system. Inclusion education occurs when children with and without disabilities engage in and study in the same courses. Inclusion is about providing children with the resources they need to learn and participate in meaningful ways. The key to success in inclusive education is recognizing students with disabilities, assisting them, and enlisting the help of peers and society.

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