

Teachers' Struggles in Applying Inclusive Education Practices for Students with Disabilities at Secondary Schools in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The article explores teachers' understanding of their teaching strategies that support inclusive educational practices for children with disabilities at secondary schools in Bangladesh. This study is largely underpinned by the ecological model of disability which focuses on the impact of environment on human behaviour, with an emphasis on examining the context to understand human development. This study aimed to answer the question of; How do teachers in secondary schools in Bangladesh understand evidence based teaching strategies for inclusion?

A questionnaire that includes a summated rating scale (quantitative data collection) and semi-structured interview with open ended questionnaire (qualitative data collection) were used to collect data from six teachers based in secondary schools. Results show that the participants experienced internal conflict in making decisions regarding their teaching practice. They were confused by pupils with disability. Most of the participants stated a belief that their personal teaching methods are the best approaches. Teachers identified cooperative group teaching, assignments, reviewing, group work, questioning, and brain storming as the most effective methods. Data shows that 50% of the participants often used mixed ability co-operative group teaching, whereas in the case of peer tutoring, 66% of the respondents were positive about reviewing and practicing the key ideas of previous lessons. Only 17% of the respondents could regularly evaluate all pupils' progress during lessons and adjust their teaching as a result. The findings indicate that effective teaching practices are often based on real-life (local) knowledge, mutual engagement and accountability, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of experiences with the student.

I. Introduction

Inclusion is an educational philosophy that emphasizes the rights of all children to attend their local school and is common throughout the western world. Inclusion is a comparatively new concept in developing countries such as Bangladesh. Research is yet to clearly record the outcomes of inclusive education on the quality of life of students with disabilities

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(Hornby, 1999). Others recognised the need for research in inclusive education to inform policy and practice (Lindsay, 2003).

The purpose of this research is to throw light on teachers' practices that support inclusive education. It is argued that the greater the skills that teachers have in dealing with students with disabilities, the more effective their teaching will be (Angelides, 2008), which will then influence learning outcomes and the quality of life of all students.

Ferguson (2008) noted that inclusive practice is not easy because it attempts to make learning available "to everybody, everywhere and all the time" (p.109). Teaching strategies for inclusive practice are needed for teachers to be responsive to all learners. The success of inclusive education depends on the ability of teachers to facilitate a good learning environment and also ensuring that their teaching caters for everyone (Flem, Moen & Gudmundsdottir, 2004).

Evidence-based teaching strategies have proved effective through use of evidence from within an inclusive setting (Atkinson, Hornby & Howard, 1997). According to Lester (2007), the main principle of evidence-based practice is that it involves making decisions based on 'evidence' rather than on, for instance, untested theory, customary practice, political dogma or uncritical benchmarking. However, "Teachers' experiences must be acknowledged and valued" (MacDonald, 2008, p. 431).

Teachers have a pivotal role in the success of inclusive educational practices (Macfarlane, 2007). However, teachers' difficulties in responding to the demands of inclusive environments of teaching and learning and providing equal opportunities to all students often undermine the practice of inclusive education. Many studies have shown that developing inclusive practice is challenging for teachers (Angelides, Georgiou & Kyriakou, 2008), and especially so for early grades (Petriwskyj, 2010). Flem, Moen and Gudmundsdottir (2004) emphasize the vital importance of creating a positive atmosphere and having good academic insights about how teachers can foster inclusive practice.

Thomas, Walker and Webb (2005) argue inclusion as "an international descriptor of a particular marriage of ethos and practice" (p.22). To understand such ethos, we need to focus on teaching-learning practice - examining how teachers could embrace diversity in inclusive settings, and how they perceive inclusive education. This development of teachers' understanding of their own teaching strategies for inclusive educational practices is explored in this paper.

Background and Context

The Bangladesh context has been considered for this research. Many Bangladeshi children with disabilities experience no education with up to 89% of these children not enrolled in schools (Directorate of Primary Education [DPE] & Centre for Services and Information on Disabilities [CSID], 2002). The vast majority of children with disabilities do not attend

school and a large percentage of children who do attend mainstream schools often drop out due to inaccessible school infrastructures and unpleasant school environments (CSID, 2002), including non-inclusive teaching practices (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007).

From the beginning of 21st century, Bangladesh has introduced in a limited way inclusive education measures in primary education to include in school children with mild to moderate disabilities. A similar policy has not been formally taken for the secondary stage.

Characterising secondary school teaching in Bangladesh, Ruitenberg (2009) identified the tension between the constraints related to teaching and learning and those related to contextual and political issues. Teacher's safety and security are often threatened by political pressure, which affect their own practices and commitment correspondingly. Thornton (2006) reports that a collaborative culture among teachers has not yet developed within the secondary schools in Bangladesh. Contextual factors such as the rigid curriculum, the low ability of many students, and the teachers' own educational background restrict the emergence of a collaborative culture. All of these factors may have a de-motivating effect on many teachers' practices. A typical issue portrayed in Ruitenberg's study (2009) was that secondary school teachers in Bangladesh discuss among themselves the low ability of the students. The tendency here is for teachers to blame the students or parents for 'being illiterate' rather than such a result being a prompt for them to examine their own teaching practice and how they could not respond adequately to the learning needs of those students.

It is perhaps true that the teachers of Bangladesh are not able to identify the real needs of their pupils. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "We are not aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves" (Gandhi, 1997). From this perspective, the study may enhance awareness of teachers about the real needs in terms of teaching in inclusive settings.

Theoretical Framework

Theories serve to justify the practice and practice informs theory (Macfarlane, 2007). This study is largely underpinned by 'Ecological Systems Theory' of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1917- 2005). Researchers and writers have taken different angles on conceptualization of the nature of disability and formal education and their interaction. This study is largely underpinned by the widely accepted model for inclusion: the ecological model which focuses on the impact of environment on human behaviour, emphasizing the context to understand human development (Macfarlane, 2007). This model emphasizes a less intrusive approach, builds on the existing support structure, expands on teacher skills, and also values the influence of family and community on children's learning and development (Bronfenbrenners, 2005).

For the purposes of this study, the ecological model is complemented by the socio-cultural theory of teaching in terms of Vygotskian and Deweyan principles as outlined by Beck and Kosnick (2006, pp. 9–14): "knowledge is constructed by learners; knowledge is experience

based; learning is social; all aspects of a person are connected; learning communities should be inclusive and equitable”.

Research Questions

The following research question has been formulated to investigate teachers’ strategies for practicing inclusive education approaches in Bangladesh.

How do teachers in secondary schools in Bangladesh understand evidence-based teaching strategies for inclusion?

The related supplementary questions are:

- a) How do teachers evaluate effective teaching learning strategies for students with disabilities in a general classroom?
- b) To what extent is current teaching practice inclusive within secondary schools in Bangladesh?

In the questions, understanding is seen as an inseparable and interconnected outcome of practice, attitude and beliefs, and knowledge of teachers. On the other hand, evidence-based teaching strategies could be defined as “clearly specified teaching strategies that have been shown in controlled research to be effective in bringing about desired outcomes in a delineated population of learners” (Mithcell, 2008, p.1).

II. Methodology

The research methodology has been developed on the basis of above theoretical framework. The study employed a mixed-methods design in order to answer the research questions in a pragmatic way focusing on ‘what works’ (Rocco et al., 2003). According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), a mixed-methods approach is appropriate when investigating an area that requires consideration of a number of inter-related research questions.

The research is designed by choosing a flexible design called ‘within-stage-mixed model design’ for the study. Within a paradigm based on a philosophical standpoint, this design allows researchers to draw on qualitative and quantitative tradition when making methodological decisions. Thus in this study both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.

According to the research design, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire constituted the instruments for collecting data. The “in-depth interviews use a less-structured approach which is sometimes referred to as semi-standardised or semi-structured” (Hall & Hall, 1996, p.157), where interviewees could express more freely their opinions. The interviews were conducted following pre-developed guidelines.

The questionnaire was an important tool for recording and justifying the strategies. The questionnaire is based on a four-point self-rating scale focused on classroom practice. This rating scale is based on Mitchell’s (2008) work, which provides an opportunity for the

participants to rate their strategies and practices for enhancing pupils' learning. The tool was a four-point Likert Scale ranging from 'very often' (4) to 'rarely/never' (1). Overall, 22 items were used for the scale; furthermore, an additional item, no 23, was added for the respondents to list their own strategies. All items in this scale were modified and prefaced with the heading 'in this school'. Participants rated their strategies and practices on the four point scale. The rated data was then compared with the interview data.

Participants

The participant selection technique used was the snowball sampling technique. "Snowball sampling is the process of selecting a sample using networks" (Kumar, 2005, p.179). Being teacher educator, the researcher had connections with classroom teachers, from whom the needed information was obtained.

A school selection criterion was set. This criterion included having at least three to four children with documented disabilities in each targeted class.

To reduce conceptual discontinuity regarding the central concept 'teaching strategies', Class- VI [grade] was decided as the target grade. The students in Class-VI have just entered secondary school after completing their primary education and are typically aged from 11 to 13 years. The teachers who taught Bangla of grade six in the target secondary schools were selected as the study participants. Six classroom teachers from six different secondary schools were selected. The participants comprised three male teachers and three female teachers. Participants' teaching experience varied from 6 to 20 years. All participants voluntarily participated in the research. The participants' age range was between 30 to 50 years. No participants reported experiencing any disabilities. All had experienced a minimal orientation on inclusive education. Only four participants had taught students with disabilities before.

III. Results

Qualitative Findings from Interviews

The participants appeared to experience internal conflict in making decisions regarding their teaching practice. Articulation of their teaching strategies posed a dilemma for them. One respondent stated, "Teaching for all or teaching for majority? It's a big question". Several participants displayed a certain attitude of avoidance towards teaching students with disabilities, and preferred to concentrate their teaching on the majority of students. It was also evident that most of the respondents were aware of the importance of the concept of teaching for all. Thus, teaching strategies varied. Several respondents in their responses demonstrated an effort to explore effective ways of teaching within an inclusive education philosophy.

The participants were also asked about effective methods. One respondent stated, "The teachers' personal method is the best of all. It is the teacher who is responsible for the

progress of students". Participants further analysed their teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Interview data also reveal that participants were eager to be successful in the classroom. One participant stated, "This is the second time in my teaching career that I have a student with disabilities. I am doing experiments with the methods which I had learnt from CPD [continuous professional development] training". Respondents also mentioned a number of teaching strategies which were used in the classroom. Teachers found cooperative group teaching, assignments, reviewing, group work, questioning, and brain-storming as the most effective methods. Participants' understanding of various teaching learning strategies are summarized as follows:

Participatory Methods

Participatory methods such as group work were reported to be effective, even though participants were aware of their shortfalls. A few participants faced problems in implementing participatory methods. One respondent said, "I came to know about participatory methods from CPD training. After the training I tried it, but faced problems." Another respondent said, "I think of a situation of mine, where the class size is big and necessary teaching aids are not available." He asked a question, "How could I go for participatory methods?" One participant thought that the weaker students could suffer as a result of participatory methods. For example, one respondent said, "it is very difficult to understand whether a disabled student has participated in the group work or not, because the tasks is completed by the group."

Participants viewed 'group work' as the heart of participatory methods. One respondent said, "I like group work, because students are encouraged. It creates an opportunity for the back-benchers to mix up with and get help from sturdier students". Another respondent said, "It's true that there might have been some group members who did nothing. They acted like deaf-audience in the group". To cope with such a situation, one respondent said, "My own judgment and techniques helped me. I supervised and visited every group and participated in the group conversation."

Cooperative Group Teaching

Respondents formed mixed-ability groups for cooperative group teaching. One respondent said, "I formed mixed ability groups which helps all the students to achieve targeted skills". Another respondent found cooperative group teaching encourages competition. According to him, "It is useful to fulfill my dual goal, one to engage all of them in group work; and secondly; do my SBA [school based assessment] through group work evaluation". Another respondent added, "In co-operative group teaching every student gets the chance to contribute, which fosters talent and creativity". Another respondent added, "During group work, I assigned two students to rotate as monitors for the class. They usually assist me in monitoring groups."

Student Attention and Teaching Aids

Promoting the development of student attention was treated as an important task by the respondents. One respondent said, "I re-arrange my class every day to encourage the attention of the student to the class activities". In this way, participants found that using teaching aids was helpful for their students.

The interview data showed that participants used chalk, dusters, globes, text books, pictures, black boards, maps, models, and overhead projectors as their teaching aids. They recognised the blackboard as a vital aid. Skill in using the blackboard could make a difference. One respondent said, "I write every important theme and draw diagrams on the blackboard. It helps students to construct a better understanding. Unfortunately, it does not work for two of the visually impaired students of my class". He added, "effective use of teaching aids depends on their appropriateness for the content and their availability."

On the other hand, a few teachers informed in the interviews that they were reluctant to use teaching aids. They indicated a preference for sophisticated aids which were not available because of their high cost. One teacher said, "Lack of teaching aids is making my task difficult. I asked my head teacher to allocate and purchase few essential teaching aids. But he replied that there was no fund for this". Contrarily, some others showed positive response, especially the younger respondents, compared to more senior ones.

Pairing Method

"The pairing method was effective for me, because disabled student can get maximum benefit from it". One respondent discussed the pairing method,

Kamal (One of the disabled students) was not good in spelling. I paired him with Karim (an able student). Now Karim helps him to correct his spelling even after the school. They live very close to each other.

Discussion Method

It was found from interviews that usually the teachers initiated discussion in the classroom. One respondent experienced a 'moving classroom' approach for laying the groundwork for discussions. As he said,

Once I introduced a 'jigsaw classroom' or 'moving classroom' activity to help students share their ideas with each other. I just formed 5 groups. Then I assigned tasks to each group to draw a concept map on 5 different aspects. After completion of their concept map, I put each map on the wall. I had warned the students in advance that they would have to describe their map to the other groups.

He further added,

Students were given a few minutes to rehearse what they might say about the map to someone from another group who had not seen it before. The activity could be compared with the movement of a train which stops at each station. Each member

of each group has the chance to tell the story of their topic to an audience of classmates from other groups.

Assignments

According to the interview data, assignments were a very good teaching method. One respondent described this practice:

We used to give and evaluate assignments in each term under the newly introduced SBA system. It carries five marks in each subject. What I did was to arrange the presentation followed by a question-answer session on different individual assignments. I finally made summaries. That was interesting.

Brainstorming

Respondents also explored brainstorming as an effective strategy in their subject. One respondent said, “They [pupils with disabilities] get a chance to utilize their higher order thinking skills by concentrating on the subject.” Another respondent added, “The weaker students get help from this process. They achieved cooperation from the stronger students”.

Ice-breaking

A few respondents indicated ice-breaking as an effective method. One respondent said, “I use recreational activities to cheer up the learners after some serious lessons. I asked them to perform jokes, acting and storytelling”.

Mind-mapping

Interview data showed that respondents found concept mapping an effective teaching strategy. One respondent stated, “I use mind-mapping to teach biography of the writer or poet”. Mind-mapping helped participants in consolidating learning. Interview data show that participants used simple line drawings, pictures, designs and diagrams for concept mapping. One participant said, “I prefer mind-mapping to represent my ideas easily in front of learners in an abbreviated way. It helps to present topics in an organised and meaningful way”.

Questioning

According to the respondents, questioning supports student interest in lessons and provide feedback more easily. Respondents mentioned that questioning is a good technique to manage the class. One respondent said, “I just asked a question to draw the attention of the inattentive student, because, a good question can change the situation”. Open-ended questioning was found to be effective by one of the respondents. He said, “Students can learn well when teachers use open-ended questioning”.

Review and Practice

Interview data showed that respondents applied various ways of reviewing his/her practice. One respondent said, “I review the previous lesson. I ask questions from the previous day’s lesson at the very beginning of my lesson”. Another respondent used reflection to improve his teaching. He said,

I try to reflect on my teaching. I discuss with my colleagues and students how the class can be improved. I visit the classes of my colleagues when I get free time, and exchange ideas and materials for teaching large classes.

Reinforcement

Participants agreed that reinforcement is an important factor to retain students' attention. One respondent said, "I introduced a class quiz for rewarding the class. Reward encouraged the pupils to do well. I usually give rewards to the student who is improving." Participants reinforced students differently. Verbal praise was viewed as positive. One teacher said, "I always praise my students after all positive things they do." Another teacher said, "I encourage the children to participate."

Storytelling and Role Play

Respondents found storytelling and role-play effective for specific topics in their Bangla Literature subject. Stories are a good way to make the text interesting for the students. One respondent stated, "I use story from our day to day life. That attracts student attention and help them remember the key points." On the other hand, another teacher said, "I found role play effective in teaching ... a drama from the text".

The respondents produced ideas about children enjoying imitation and learning with fun. Teachers enjoy their role-playing in the classroom. There was a perception that it helps to develop higher order thinking skills. However, one respondent suggested the need to be well planned and prepared when introducing role-play, otherwise negative things could happen. From his experience,

Once, I decided to introduce role-play in my class. Students were enjoying this too much. The class ran out of my control. Another time, a student with disabilities (intellectually disabled) made a mistake in playing his role. He had just forgotten his dialogue, which caused a disruption.

Evaluation and Feedback

Interview data suggested that participants are engaged in supervision, monitoring and evaluation of their classroom activities. One respondent said, "It is the rule that students will learn their task daily. I supervise this regularly. I make sure that they look prepared."

Participants evaluate their teaching by different means. One participant said, "I evaluate my class from feedback and my own monitoring of classroom activities". According to the respondents, own personal judgment, class tests, homework, assignments, group presentations, and class activities are the basis of evaluating the students. One respondent said about his judgment, "I can understand that the students are learning just by looking at their faces".

Participants depict feedback as a very useful method for them to have an understanding of students' progress. Giving homework tasks and getting feedback is the best way to

understand that the learner had learned something. This feedback helps teachers to develop quality of instruction.

Relating text with practical experiences

A respondent commented that “This strategy encourages students to be curious, and offer them an easy way to remember the content.” One respondent was talking about relating text with practical experiences, “I usually relate the text with our day-to-day life experiences, which make the lesson interesting to the learners.” Interview data also shows that a few respondents were heavily relying on the text book, as one respondent said, “I used nothing outside the text book as the first resource, only later I thought about other examples beyond the textbook.”

Communicative methods

Interview data show participants’ preference for communicative methods to teach linguistic aspects of the text. All the participants placed importance on teaching spelling and correct pronunciation in their class. The participants were on a common platform in their teaching in terms of spelling and pronunciation. Correct spelling would help them to get a higher score in the examinations which is important for their success. One respondent pointed out during the interview, “Standard pronunciation, free from colloquialism would attract students to the glory of Bangla literature, and correct spelling will grow confidence in them.”

Quantitative findings from the Questionnaire

The administration of questionnaires in person by the researcher resulted in a 100% return rate. The following table shows the summary of responses to the questionnaire. Participants rated their teaching strategies on the five-point rating scale, ‘Rate yourself about your strategies and practices’.

Table 1: Rating teaching strategies

No	Criteria	Rating (%)				
		Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely/ Never	Median
1.	I use mixed ability co-operative group teaching	17%	50%	33%	0%	3
2.	I use Peer Tutoring	0%	17%	33%	50%	2
3.	In my lesson I review and practice the key ideas of previous lesson	33%	33%	17%	17%	3
4.	I evaluate all pupils' progress during lessons and adjust my teaching as a result	17%	33%	50%	0%	3
5.	I provide feedback to all pupils in my class	67%	0%	33%	0%	3
6.	I teach my pupils cognitive strategies; i.e. problem solving strategies	0%	17%	33%	50%	2
7.	I encourage my pupils' to set goals and to evaluate their own progress in achieving them	0%	17%	50%	33%	2
8.	I teach my pupils a range of memory strategies	17%	17%	16%	50%	2
9.	I assist my pupils to improve their reading comprehension by predicting, questioning and summarizing texts	17%	33%	17%	33%	2
10.	I use behavioral approaches in my teaching, especially in the case of pupils with behavioural difficulties	0%	17%	17%	66%	2
11.	I teach my pupils appropriate social skills	66%	17%	17%	0%	4
12.	I try to create a classroom climate safe, predictable and motivating	50%	17%	33%	0%	3
13.	I try to ensure my pupils have adequate time for learning	17%	17%	33%	33%	2
14.	I adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of all my pupils	0%	0%	0%	100%	1
15.	I adapt assessment methods to suit the needs of all my pupils	0%	0%	17%	83%	1

16.	I use available information and communication technology, including assistive technology for pupils with disabilities	17%	17%	16%	50%	2
17.	I actively co-operate with other professionals and teachers	33%	33%	34%	0%	3
18.	I actively involve parents in their children's programme	0%	17%	33%	50%	2
19.	In the case of beginning readers, I teach phonological processing (e.g., listening skills and phonics)	50%	33%	17%	0%	3
20.	My classroom environment (e.g. lighting, ventilation, sound) is optimal for learning	17%	33%	17%	33%	2
21.	In the case of pupils' undesirable social behaviours, I analyze what purpose they serve and design ways of changing them	33%	33%	17%	17%	3
22.	I ensure that all my pupils achieve a 90 percent or better success rate on critical tasks	17%	33%	50%	0%	2
23.	I use other strategies (please mention)					

Only one of the items had a median score of four, representing a central response of 'very often'. Participants taught their students social skills in the classroom. On the other hand, two of the items had median score of one, representing the response 'rarely/never.' It reflects the reality of education in Bangladesh. Participants had no scope to adapt curriculum or assessment. Eight of the items had a median score of three, representing a response of 'often'. Participants often introduced strategies such as mixed ability cooperative group teaching, review and practice, reflection on pupils' progress, feedback, ensuring safe classroom atmosphere, cooperation with other professionals, phonological process, and behavior modification. The respondents were more likely to respond 'occasionally' to practice 11 strategies in the mainstream classroom. These are peer tutoring, cognitive strategies, self-learning by setting goals, memory strategies, reading comprehension, behavioural approaches, information technology, and ensuring better achievement of the students.

Data indicate that 50% of the participants often used mixed ability co-operative group teaching, whereas in the case of pair tutoring, 50% of teachers' responses was 'never'. Sixty-six percent of respondents were positive about reviewing and practicing the key ideas of

previous lessons. Only 17% of the respondents could regularly evaluate all pupils' progress during lessons and adjust their teaching as a result.

Most of the respondents (67%) provided feedback during the session regularly. Half of the participants (50%) had never tried cognitive strategies in their classroom, whereas half of the respondents (50%) occasionally encouraged their pupils to set goals and to evaluate their (students') own progress in achieving them. Half of the participants (50%) very rarely used memory strategies in their class. The highest number of respondents (66%) never used behavioural approaches in their teaching, whereas most of the respondents (66%) taught appropriate social skills to their pupils very often.

It should be noted that the percentages derived from the small sample should be treated with caution, and may be regarded as useful only to supplement the qualitative information presented above.

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the teaching learning strategies of secondary school teachers in respect of inclusive education. A qualitative interview and a quantitative survey instrument were used to gather data. Data analysis indicated that the participants in this study are looking for appropriate intervention strategies to support the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Findings from the current study indicate that teachers were confused about their teaching strategies. They were experiencing a conflict of roles posed by the question, teaching for all or teaching for the majority? They, at the same time appeared to recognize that, "inclusive education is distinguished by an acceptance of differences between students as an ordinary aspect of human development," as pointed out by Florian and Kershner. (2009, p. 173). As a result, participants reported a need to understand their students. They applied individualised analysis procedures to understand weaknesses in their students and shape their pedagogy. In their responses, the teachers showed an awareness of the principle that effective pedagogy involves, "the understanding of children, learning, teaching and curriculum which enables teaching to happen and the school and policy contexts which formalise and legitimise it" (Alexander, 2004, p.174).

Teaching strategies appeared to be dependent on the individual learner's interests and needs, as the analysis identified that different teachers experienced problem situations differently. Reported teaching practices showed a mixed stance among the participants. They introduced not just purely traditional or modern evidence-based methods in their classroom. Respondents also introduced their own modified methods that were thought better or more appropriate and experimented using trial and error.

Interview data also showed that respondents used teacher-centric methods most of the time. For example, the use of lectures, blackboards, reading aloud, discussion and teacher-

directed questioning. Respondents also employed methods such as cooperative group teaching, assignments, reviewing, group work, questioning, and brain storming. These were perceived as the most effective teaching methods by respondents. The questionnaire data indicates that 83% of the respondents could not evaluate all pupils' progress during lessons. They were experiencing problems of managing a large classroom. This perhaps reflects an uncertainty in their practice.

A focus of teachers' strategies was reported as making concepts clear to students. As a result, teachers reported attempting innovative strategies such as 'feedback mechanisms' or 'peer assessment'. Respondents indicated a belief that student success depended upon appropriate and targeted instruction.

Respondents were interested in finding out about effective intervention strategies, particularly considering the controversial issues that exist in the field of special education (Atkinson, Hornby, & Howard, 1997; Mitchell, 2008).

Effective interventions are found in evidence-based practice. However, teachers in this study did not manifest a conceptualization or understanding of this issue. Most teachers in this study appear to incorporate their own strategies with the intention of doing their best for all students. They consequently used feedback, collaborative learning and mind mapping. The use of feedback as an effective teaching strategy is well documented in Hattie's meta-analysis research with an effect size of 0.73 (Hattie, 2009). A range of other interventions were reported as effective by participants. For example, participants used techniques such as rearranging seating arrangements, quizzes, and linking with reality to bring about focused attention.

The findings of this study cannot be generalised because of the small number of participants. The contribution of this study, however, lies in demonstrating what can happen when teachers are committed to accomplishment of the goal of improving the day-to-day practice of teaching students with disabilities. It shows that effective teaching practices are often based on real-life (local) knowledge, mutual engagement and accountability, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of experiences with the child.

The majority of the respondents in the study took the cautiously optimistic position that, if resources available to support inclusion; and if there is adequate administrative support and appropriate infrastructure, teaching material and technological devices, then the aim of inclusive teaching would be fulfilled.

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