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TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OBSERVED IN INCLUSIVE CLASSES

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Abstract

The world over there is a wave towards more inclusive education for children who are disadvantaged in one-way or another. The Salamanca conference of 1994 focused on the child with Special Education Needs (SEN) with a call to governments to ensure that such children were given an appropriate education especially by being included in mainstream classes. Developing countries shows less initiative and effort towards including the child with SEN, with more efforts towards including the girl child. But some schools are implementing the policy on their own initiative. It can be assumed that their belief in inclusive education drive their practice. This was a small scale study aimed at finding out their beliefs, their sources and the relationship with their practices.

It was a qualitative case study where in-depth interviews and classroom observation of one teacher were conducted. The class had two children with SEN while the remaining fourteen had no obvious SEN.

It was discovered that in line with theories of education and teacher change, there is interplay between beliefs and practices. But the interplay is not necessarily linear in nature but complex usually mediated by the contextual background underlying the actions. It was discovered that

some SEN were more accommodating than others in mainstream classes. The biggest impediment to inclusive education is the societal perceptions of the people. The schools and teachers are ready to accommodate the children if supported by the society.

INTRODUCTION

It is insightful to begin with two scenarios from the researchers' personal experience first as a pupil then as a teacher.

Scenario 1

I am left handed. When I was in nursery school, my teacher used to punish me in order to force me to use my right hand for writing. Only the intervention of my father made the teacher stop. I know this is an experience shared by many left-handed students worldwide. Unfortunately, not many had some one to intervene on their behalf. Usually people who switch from left to right-handedness tend to write poorly and there in lies the paradox. Being left-handed earns a punishment, switching to the right hand (and writing poorly) might also earn a punishment!

Scenario 2

I once taught a very bright student in my history class. Usually on introduction of a topic, the boy would be a step ahead sometimes due to reading ahead but mostly because he was a very fast thinker. His answers would make insightful linkages with other topics, subjects and current world affairs. Good though the insights were they were out of the prescribed curriculum parameters. I also always tried to slow down his pace to accommodate the rest of the class who

in most cases needed a repeat. The boy started dodging my classes or distracting others. Nevertheless, his marks were well above the rest. I punished him for such behaviour!

These are some experiences, which other teachers grapple with in their day-to-day teaching. They exemplify how teachers deal with children who are different from others in terms of race, religion, language, gender and “giftedness” among others. All children are different and this diversity usually challenges the teacher. However, the focus of this paper is the diversities that arise out of exceptional (atypical) development as opposed to the normal (typical) development (Allen and Schwartz, 2001).

The meaning of the term *Normal development* is contentious due to its in most cases culturally defined. However, there is some agreement that, as children grow, change and acquire skills, the process moves along a *developmental continuum* in a predictable pattern common to most children of the same age (Allen and Schwartz, 2001). The children who do not fit in the pattern are seen as atypical or exceptional.

Exceptional or atypical development can start at birth e.g. Down syndrome or acquired later in life due to trauma and injury. Being a continuum, there are children who fall somewhere between the extreme ends of the typical or atypical development. These might exhibit many signs of ‘normality’ but due to their uniqueness, they need some special help from teachers who usually do not offer it. They have Special Education Needs (SEN)

Teachers have beliefs of what is normal and abnormal, what is right and wrong. These beliefs have an impact on their classroom practice (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002; Macnab and Payne, 2003) especially on how they handle children who are different. The beliefs are deeply

entrenched and usually the teacher is unaware of the beliefs or their nature (Croll and Moses, 2002). The current educational trend is to make the teacher aware of their deep-seated beliefs and their underpinnings to ensure they do not hamper smooth pupil learning.

Students with SEN need communities and teachers to make a number of adjustments in their ways in order to optimize such students' academic achievements. The original approach of putting pupils with SEN in special schools never catered for their needs well (Cadwell, in Allen and Schwatz, 2001). This dissatisfaction with special schools gave birth to Inclusive Education (IE), which has a philosophy that all children can learn, and that *inclusion in the mainstream classes is a right not a privilege*. The next approach was Integration. A special unit for pupils with SEN attached with in the compound of the mainstream school. Research found this still to be segregative. Now the approach advocated for is true inclusion (UNESCO, 1999, 1994) where all children should be in the same class exposed to the same learning environment but receive specialized help and support where required including curriculum and assessment modification.

Though IE involves making the school “welcoming” to all children and individualizing the attention given to the children to match their SEN to ensure that all children achieve (Dyson, 2001), the road to inclusion is still blocked by those who believe inclusion is impossible and unrealistic and those calling for a more “cautious” form of inclusion.

Despite being signatories in the Salamanca conference of 1994 towards implementing IE developing countries like Pakistan and Uganda are still doing poorly on implementation. There are fewer resources and even less government support for IE. It seems schools include the child with disabilities for other reasons other than government compulsion as opposed to developed countries like the US, which even have laws like the Individual with Disabilities Education act

(IDEA) which compels and guides the way inclusion is enacted. In countries like Pakistan where this study was done, including the child with SEN seems voluntary than obligatory. In such an environment, each school will set its parameters and classroom practices depending on contextual realities. Accessing the teachers' beliefs in these schools is important to know what drives them.

The major research question was: what are the teachers' current beliefs about IE and how do they relate to their practice. The subsidiary questions were: what are the teacher's beliefs about IE especially about the child with SEN? What factors influence teachers' beliefs and how do they do so? How do the beliefs relate to the teachers classroom practice?

It was a qualitative study since the purpose was to get a deep understanding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of the teacher beliefs and practices. It was a case study design since the context was crucial in the understanding of the phenomena under study (Gillham, 2000, Cohen, Manion and Marrison, 2000). The three data collection tools were interviews, classroom observation and document analysis. The data collection took a period of seven weeks with at least two lessons observed per day. After each lesson, informal interviews and conversations were made with the teacher. The Head teacher, some pupils and a parent were also interviewed. Documents including worksheets, classroom assessment record and psychological evaluations from doctors were analyzed. This multi method and multi source approach aimed at validating data through the process of triangulation.

PROCEDURE

The school

The school was purposively sampled. In Karachi, Pakistan, most schools use Urdu, as their medium of communication the researcher who does not speak Urdu needed an English medium school. Secondly, the researcher needed a school that had IE as a policy and had been including such children for at least 6 years since some schools do include children with SEN as *a one shot event*. Final reason was that most schools were doing their end of year exams but this particular school followed the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum thus their timetable was slightly different from the rest. It was a private, co-education, day school located in a middle-class residential area of Karachi. The Primary section runs up to class 5. The average age of pupils in class 5 was 10 years. The numbers in each class ranged from 10 – 17 pupils. The seating arrangement was in small groups of three to five around a table. It was very well facilitated school.

The teacher

The researcher worked with the class teacher of class five, Ms Sharifa (not her real name). She was about 33 years old with a BA and MBA. She had first taught for 5 years in two elite schools in Karachi then served another 5 years in a bank. On getting married, she retired to be a housewife. She decided to teach again and for more than 2 years had been teaching in this school. She had attended a number of workshops on effective teaching from various institutions and IE from the Aga Khan University. She was not a professional teacher by training but had learnt on the job. She was very fluent in her English.

The Principal

She had a BCom degree. She had also attended a 6-month course on IE from the Aga Khan University. She was a co-founder of the school and had been the principal since its inception. She does administrative work but also teaches a few lessons. She speaks fluent English.

The Pupils

Imran (not his real name) was twelve and a half years old. He was tall, wore glasses and looked healthy. A casual glance would not show he has any SEN. He had good command of English. He had undergone two psychological evaluations and had been diagnosed to have multiple deficits the area of intelligence (commonly referred to as multiple learning problems). He was noisy, couldn't sit still for long and would play mean pranks on others or beat them.

Mina (Not her real name) was 13 year old, healthy and very lively. She was clearly bigger than all the other pupils in class were. She had good command of English. She had undergone a psychological evaluation after her parents noted her poor concentration, over sensitivity, tantrums and general slowness. Her diagnosis was mild mental retardation in the area of intelligence. But though she had difficulty in mathematics, her performance was borderline (her special need was mild)

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data presentation and analysis were concurrent following the broad themes that emerged. The codes used were:

- Int = Interview

- T = Teacher
- P = Parent of Imran
- Pp = Principal
- M = Myself
- Th = a trained special teacher / therapist who was attending to another child in another class

Teacher beliefs in Inclusive Education

Ms Sharifa repeatedly reaffirmed her commitment to IE “*you see personally I’m in favour of having inclusive classes. I’m all convinced...I feel good to have children... with SEN,... like Imran...*” (Int. T) and that “*One thing I have remembered about inclusion in schools,... when I joined this school, when I told people they asked me ‘what are you doing in a school for the retarded (sic) children’*” (Int. T). She had defended the schools position by explaining the difference between special schools (which parents are more familiar with) and inclusive schools. Thus, she showed commitment to and knowledge about IE highlighted by her readiness to defend the schools position in face of the negative prevailing social-cultural community perceptions.

Still despite all the challenging circumstances of handling classes with pupils with SEN she had stayed on the job for more than two years. She said “*I feel comfortable here (Int.T)*. She could have left to join a ‘non-labeled’ school. Croll and Moses (2000) say that the principal of

Inclusion of all children in mainstream neighbourhood schools has achieved some widespread support (from educational professionals), at least at the rhetorical level.

The way she embraced the challenge of teaching an inclusive class is also testimony to her commitment. She had joined this school with some experience of teaching but with no formal teacher training. When asked, “*What were your feelings on your first day here on being told that your class has some students with SEN and have those feelings changed (Int. M)?*” She said, “*My way of teaching is that before teaching I usually try to find out the child’s background. So when I was told that I have such children (with SEN) I told the school not to tell me (who they are) and let me find out myself because I feel it was inside me...if you are talking about attitude, mental block etc I was positive then and I’m positive now. No change as such*” (Int. T). As Haney, Lumpe, Czerniak and Egan (2002) found out in their research on teacher practices and beliefs, most teachers are ready to take on an innovation even when it is perceived as a high-risk challenge.

She always first tried to get background information about the child to enable her design appropriate practices to fit the SEN of the child. She said “*I feel that any child at any point of time or another will have some kind of SEN or another that may be permanent or different because of some emotional or social problem*” (Int.T) which was interesting because it rhymed with UNESCO (2002) teacher’s guide for IE. On asking her whether she had read the guide, her answer was negative. This meant that sometimes teachers’ beliefs can echo recommendations by the theorists or maybe that some strategies in IE are purely common sense.

The strategy of first knowing the child’s background helped Ms Sharifa solve Mina’s tantrums and withdrawal. She needed love and recognition. Ms Sharifa said “*...so I have to keep re-*

enforcing love and attention...so I gave her some class responsibility, kind of telling her that you are the best in class and by doing this you are setting a bad example”(Int.T). The researcher never saw Mina make any trouble. She was very jolly and responsible.

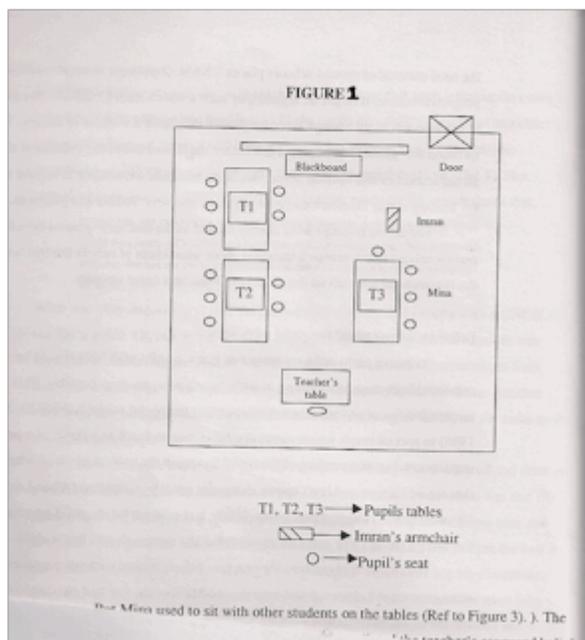
When asked about her feelings towards *true* or *total* inclusion Ms Sharifa said, *“It is very idealistic...we see a very small percentage or ratio of special education...but supposing even if there is a national policy there would still be a very small percentage and the rest left out. So the thing is not a very realistic situation” (Int.T).* She also said, *“It’s not a question of can or can not and should not or what to which level can we take on. We have to take them (like Imran) on up to primary level, but secondary, No. Maybe it’s time to tell his mother to send him to special school” (Int.T).* This was echoed by her Principal *“there are certain cases I can handle so I will take those but there are certain cases which I can not handle, then I can not take those...if we take every one teachers would run away [laughter]...they will not know what to do” (Int. Pp).* They both believed that including all children with SEN in mainstream schools was unworkable. They still believed in special schools. So of the two dialectic stances- the ‘Principled’ or ‘ideological’ stance versus the ‘pragmatic’ stance both the Principal and Ms Sharifa subscribed to the ‘pragmatic’ stance.

But their belief to take the more complex cases to special school rhymes with the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994) which says that special schools or units within inclusive schools may continue to provide the most suitable education for the relatively small number of children who can not adequately be served in regular classrooms or schools.

Teachers Practices in Inclusive classrooms

“Blending in”

According to IE philosophy, the child with SEN should be made as comfortable as possible by blending in with others. According to Alton lee, Rietveld, Klenner, Dalton, Diggins and Town (2000) it is not the child to fit in the system but it is the system to fit the child. Ms Sharifa said she did not want Imran and Mina to “stick out like a sore thumb”. As such, her topics and lessons were the same for all. However, her classroom setting showed a mismatch between her beliefs and observable practice. The sitting arrangement was permanent with a set of three big tables each seating 4-5 pupils. Imran would sit in an armchair positioned near the wall separate from others or near the teachers table. He was the only one sitting in an armchair. However, Mina sat with the other pupils. (Refer to figure 1).



There were times when Imran was isolated for large stretches of time and would be seen not in pace with the rest of the class. This gap militated against getting some help from peers. Belanger (2000) notes that despite the fact that students who experience difficulties are taught with regular students ‘under one roof’ it seems differential treatment of such student does occur. Ms Sharifa said “...now I know I can not make Imran sit with the others...when boys get up to walk he trips them, pinches others...hits his sister, pulls hair and ears and does not want to wash his hands after coming from the washroom” (Int. T). During one classroom observation, Imran slapped his sister who retaliated with a push. The teacher intervened. This was happening in Pakistan in a contextual culture where boys do not touch girls. Another time during break time, he deliberately pushed two of his peers. In the fourth week of the study, he started a fight, which led to the suspension of all boys in the class for a day because they all took part in the brawl. These observations validated the teacher’s assertion that Imran was a challenge. Croll and Moses (2000) advocate for putting emphasis on practical solutions to immediate problems that best serve the needs of (all) children with in the available resources. Therefore, the assumption is that the teacher’s belief of not wanting the child to stick out was challenged by the need for and belief in orderly and strife free classroom and it seems the later belief won. This means that if there are two competing beliefs the teacher will choose the most pragmatic one.

Mina on the other hand sat with the other pupils on the tables interacting well with peers. Her placement was possible because her SEN did not disturb the class and she had ‘blended in’.

Pedagogy

Though the schools founding philosophy and mission statement envisioned contemporary and vibrant child centred practices including inquiry based learning, most lessons observed had a marked absence of varied presentation like role-plays and hand-on activities. The most predominant presentation was the textbook as source of knowledge, the teacher's oral input and blackboard work. However, the researcher noted some project work in Science and SST where the pupils were obliged to do some individual research and present it as a paper for continuous assessment. Ms Sharifa's 45 minutes lessons manifest two distinct parts. The first half hour the teacher gives instructions and makes pupils experience new knowledge and the remaining time she would give some kind of assessment work to do. In the first part the explanations, examples and activities were the same for all. She said, "*I generally have the same topic because I do not want the children to feel left out that they are doing a different topic...only that Imran's work book will have more pictures, more words and simpler exercises (Int.T)*". Pupils would be called to the podium to read part of the text as the teacher interrupted the flow to ensure correct pronunciation. Imran's turn would draw 3 times more interruptions. In most cases, the researcher noted that the teacher would not slow down the pace of the lesson to help Imran catch up. Some times, she would start the lesson with Imran still looking for the book to read. Mostly he could be seen lost and having 'switched off'. Though planning the same lesson is in line with IE but maintaining, a uniform pace for all showed a mismatch between her beliefs in IE and observed behaviour. She said, "*There should be a balance. The pleasure you derive from attending to such needs is different from that of teaching the normal children the balance should be that the others do not get disrupted*" (Int.T). Her idea of balance was skewed against the child with SEN. The 'normal' child is paramount in her mind.

It is only during computer lessons that the researcher observed the teacher trying to make her lessons more practical and pupil centred. She had not drawn from the knowledge of learning styles (Gardner, 1995). Varying the methods would have catered for the learners who are not visual or auditory especially Imran who seemed to be a manipulative / tactile learner. She said “*I think he likes science and is interested in projects*” and “*...when I explained how (Electric) circuits work... so when we had a project for making a circuit he was the first to bring all his material insisting to me to tell him how to make a circuit...*” (Int.T). Interestingly the teacher had made an important observation that Imran is a hands-on person but fell short of making meaning of it for application to other subjects.

The times when Imran was helped with his work, he produced wonderful results. Ms Sharifa encouraged the parents to help him with his homework. During the electric circuit project “*...although he couldn't do it alone. So I allowed him to get some help from others and his mother...*” (Int. T). The researcher observed a computer class where pupils were typing their project work for which they had been doing some research for a fortnight. The project was about diseases. The pupils' worked in pairs. It was the one time the researcher really saw collaboration take place. Pupils doing task on similar diseases paired up. Imran paired up with another boy. At one point they were arguing about the lay out of the paper and they called the researcher to help who told them that they should come to an agreement after all the final work would be individually presented and each could use which ever lay out was preferred. They continued to type. Imran decided that since he was slower he should let the other boy do the typing. The noticeable aspect was the enthusiasm for work and absorption that he displayed. This is in line with the UNESCO guide for teachers that within the class, teachers should develop opportunities for ‘peer tutoring’. More able pupils can assist the less able...also make sure that the children

with special needs can also make meaningful contribution in school work so they do not become depended (sic) and objects of 'help'.(UNESCO, 2001, p 71)

Ms Sharifa at times gave Imran individualized attention. She would call him for a 1-to 1 attention because she said that though because of his age he was in class 5 his comprehension was at class 2-3 level. Therefore, when she taught a topic his work was scaled down to class 2 or 3 level. Thus, the teacher was handling two levels with in lesson and it was straining as the Principal said, *“I will be very careful now in my new intake because you can not handle such a gap intellectually...because the child will suffer. He will be frustrated there is no way a teacher can be teaching grade 1 math and grade 5 math in the same period. It is impossible...a remedial teacher would be better suited” (Int. P)*. Ms Mina’s practice was in line with IE philosophy but clearly tough for the school. It also shows how schools and teachers try to cope with the challenges and make pragmatic solutions. It also shows how experience can determine teachers’ future beliefs and actions. The Principal said she would be more careful in her future intake meaning that her beliefs in total inclusion were clearly shaken.

Assessment and Reporting

It was during assessment that more Inclusion was observed. The IB handbook had clear guidelines for assessment practices and in part, it said.

Assessment focuses upon the quality of student learning during the process of this inquiry, which is evident in the products of this inquiry. Assessment is therefore, integral to the taught curriculum. It is the means by which we analyze students’ learning and effectiveness of our teaching and acts as future foundation to base our future planning and practice. (ISCP, 1996, p.49)

Projects were one major way of assessing pupil's learning. Though the researcher observed only one project, it was policy that nearly every topic done in science would be researched into by pupils and a report written which constituted the school's continuous assessment. The advantage was pupils were not tied to only one way of presentation. All the reports varied in their outlook. Some had pictures, others handwritten, typed while others were presented as poems. *"I just give them broad guidelines and what they should not miss, the rest is up to them and creativity and organization earns them marks"*(Int. T). This would cater for pupils' individuality.

During a grammar lesson on Conjunctions Ms Sharifa, give Imran a special worksheet where he had just to fill in the missing conjunctions in already constructed sentences with pictorial representations, while the rest of the class including Mina were supposed to construct the sentences by themselves. This was simpler. She said *"The topics are the same; the oral exercises are the same. The written work is different...like in grammar if we are doing adjectives it will be for all only that Imran's workbook will have more pictures and simpler words"* (Int.T).

She said that in Imran's case when writing report forms she does not give award marks e.g. 40% or pass or fail but give a more qualitative descriptions in areas he has been able to achieve and those he is still struggling. *"Comparing him with others would be unfair"* (Int.T). Such Inclusive practice focuses on the skills developed. For Mina the criterion was the same as the rest of the class. The researcher observed two tests administered and Mina completed with in the stipulated time. The teacher had recognized the fact that she was a borderline student who had *"improved a lot because she has remedial help from home"* (Int. T). In addition, her background information indicated just mild mental retardation, which according to the teacher was being well managed

by the remedial teacher as opposed to Imran who was not getting remediation while at home. It also showed that cases of mild SEN, which shows a lot of improvement, are treated as 'normal'.

Parental involvement

Parents are very crucial in the success of IE. Evans (1998) says families are the first and foremost decision makers on behalf of the children. Parental actions influence the beliefs and actions of the teacher. Mina's parent, who was paying for remedial tuition at home, helped Mina improve making the teacher believe that she was fit for a 'normal' child treatment. She was sitting with the rest. She was not getting one-on-one attention from the teacher. This, as compared to Imran whose parents had withdrawn the remedial support and his progress stagnated.

On why Imran did not have remedial help and the Principal said *"for two years he did have special teachers who used to come to help...but parents think that remedial means 3 months or 6 months they want to see results. They have not understood that remedial is life long. It is a 1 on 1 concentrated help that the child is getting to go through school. He will not be cured. You can not cure dyslexia; you can not cure ADD...no you cannot so they need that extra help because the teacher can't do so much"* (Int.Pp). It seems that parental unawareness on how far their role stretches makes IE difficult to implement by the teachers and schools. Awareness is key to parental involvement as Evans (1998) notes

"For parents the child represents a day to day reality and a life long commitment. The reality of having a child with SEN is always present for life...Professional, on the other hand, are working with a set of rules and procedures, viewing each child as one amongst the many being provided for with in a defined service.

The professional simply wants to get the job done. The rhythm is different for the parent and the professional...” (p.10)

Handling the child with SEN has an emotional ‘baggage’ for the parents who usually feel that what they are doing is enough and the best for their children, which might not be the same feeling of the service provider.

Though parental awareness is crucial, the school had no comprehensive systematic road map put in place to involve parents and raise their awareness. Imran’s parent noted this fact “*at least the school should have once in 3 months something where parents can meet...like a parent support group...because in so many ways perhaps I’m not handling something in the way it should and some other mother is doing a better job of it. So we can talk about our difficulties perhaps...*” (Int. P). The school had no systematic mechanism to involve the parents especially those with children with SEN. It seems the interactions and decisions were adhoc.

Never the less in the third week of the study, Ms Sharifa and the Principal invited all parents and facilitated a workshop with a theme ‘Inclusion without labelling’ but only 17 parents (about 20% turned up)! One parent stood up and said “I’m sorry to be rude but let’s be honest our (normal) children will pick up bad habits (from the children with SEN)” Much as the school made attempts to try to involve parents and raise their awareness the parental feelings and cultural perceptions were very hard to break. The Principal said that some parents had withdrawn their children because they did not want them to study with “Pagals” (an Urdu derogatory term used to refer to mentally impaired people). For a private school that depends on student population for profitability, withdrawal of children can be a discouraging factor. Fortunately, the school was committed and did not drop the IE policy.

Type of SEN

The type and severity of the SEN was important in influencing the teachers' beliefs on IE. The SEN that seemed to disrupt the norm of the class made the teacher rethink their commitment to ideal inclusion. Mina easily fitted in while Imran was not as well absorbed. Ms Sharifa commented about one child who had Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) *“personally I'm happy that he has gone because he would disturb the whole class. That boy was uncontrollable”* (Int. T). The pupils with SEN who seem to achieve academically strengthen the teachers beliefs in IE e.g. Mina while those who seem not to achieve academically but can only achieve from the social interaction with the 'normal' pupils comprise teachers' beliefs in IE. She said about Imran *“academically I do not think there is anything he has gained other than keeping up with the class”* also that *“I think that it's good to have children in class with SEN, like Imran with multiple problems...I do not know how far we can stretch because he is not benefiting from our efforts on academic ground...it is as if he is just here because of his mother...a feeling as if at least my child is going to a normal school.”* (Int. T). Ms Sharifa still has the narrow belief that school achievement is only measurable on academic parameters, which does not rhyme adequately with the philosophy of IE.

DISCUSSION

The study set out to find out what the teachers beliefs about IE for the child with SEN, the sources, what factors influence the beliefs and how they do so and finally how do the beliefs relate to the teachers observable classroom practices.

Beliefs

Teachers believe in IE and are ready to handle children with SEN in their mainstream classes. This is despite the fact that the government has not done much to play the supportive role in terms of resource provision. But the beliefs are not for ‘total’ or ‘ideal’ inclusion but rather for ‘cautious’ inclusion where more profound cases like ADD should be sent to special schools. This also meant that they do not believe themselves capable of handling all cases of SEN especially those that do not seem to progress ‘academically’. For them the social development is less important as compared to the intellectual development. Learning is equal only to intellectual academic achievement.

Relationship between beliefs and practices

Interplay

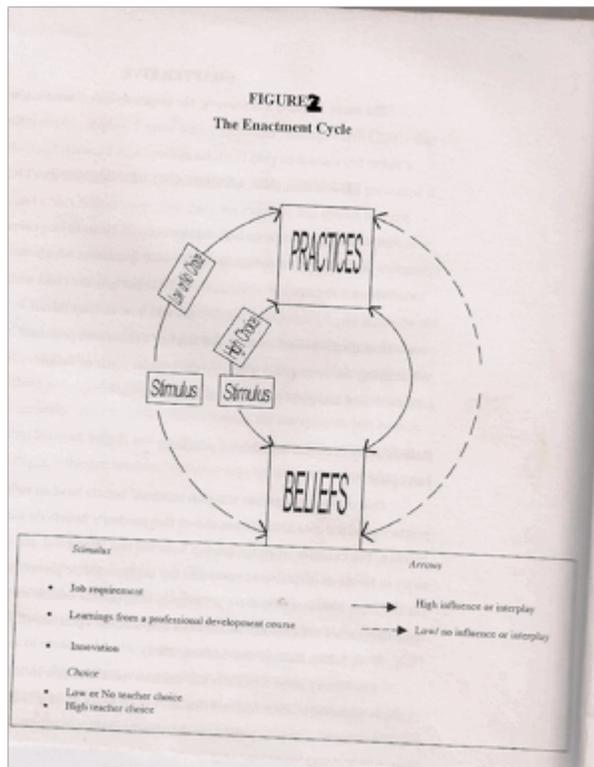
The study revealed that teachers’ beliefs do indeed influence their practice. The teacher went ahead to try to create an inclusive environment and to try to educate parents to gain more support. She also changed the assessment and reporting to fit the child with SEN. There surely is interplay in that the teacher beliefs have an effect on that teacher’s practice (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996; Sahin, Bullock and Stables, 2002).

Conversely, sometimes the teachers’ practices influence their beliefs. Teachers are pragmatic and only do what works. When they try out a strategy that is not yielding results, they abandon it. When the teacher realized that Imran could not sit with others due to his anti social behaviour she separated him. This was when her beliefs in total inclusion changed. Teachers are pragmatic

and functional that when an Inclusive strategy seems to take a lot of time away from the mainstream pupils it is abandoned.

This interplay between beliefs and practices is complex as Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) noted that it is not linear and straight forward though some research has presented it a simple cause and effect relationship. In the study, the teacher started out with out formal training in IE but exhibited inclusive practices. In this case, there could be the influence of context or just that teachers just do what they have to do when confronted by a situation or as Peters (2002) call it “doing what comes naturally”.

The study showed that the primacy of the job (stimulus) acts as a ‘push’ factor for the enactment of IE. In most cases, teachers do not necessarily need to believe in a strategy first to put it into practice. Most teacher when given a job description rarely dwell upon their beliefs but rather just go ahead and take on the challenge. In the Enactment Cycle (figure 2) the primacy of the job (stimulus) makes the teacher take on whatever the job demands irrespective of beliefs. The enactment factor is mediated by the factor of choice. How much choice the teacher has may depend on contextual realities. However, where the context allows a lot of choice, the enactment or adoption of an innovation will be substantially affected by the teacher’s beliefs.



The study also shows that sometimes there is a mismatch between espoused beliefs and observed practices. This contradiction means that the relationship between beliefs and practices is negative.

Factors that influence beliefs

The study showed that beliefs are SEN sensitive. Pupils with out profound mental or social impairments are more acceptable than those that have more complex impairments like ADD because they are easier to handle and less disruptive in the mainstream class. In cases of profound impairment, the teachers' beliefs in inclusion of the child with SEN are considerably lower.

Beliefs in IE are determined by how far the teacher feels s/he will be successful in handling the SEN in question. Teachers measure their success by “student learning achievement” (Gusky, 2002). These achievements are usually academic in nature. So any child who can only gain emotionally or socially from IE is believed not fit for inclusion. This narrow outlook to student achievement is an important factor in influencing teachers’ beliefs in IE. This contradicts the IE philosophy that some children can only gain from social interaction rather than academic (UNESCO, 1994, 2001).

From the study it was evident that beliefs and practices are influenced by parental and societal perceptions. Schools never act in isolation from the community. Most times teachers’ beliefs echo those of the societies they live in. Where the beliefs deviate from those of a particular society, still that society will still impinge on the way the beliefs are shaped. In case of an inclusive school, the school and teachers have to mediate their beliefs and practices with the beliefs of the parents of the children without overt SEN. As such, how far the school will go in inclusion is measured in terms of how much it will alienate the other parents.

The availability (or unavailability) of a clear benchmark for teachers to evaluate their performance has an impact on their beliefs and subsequent practices in IE. Teachers seem unclear about whether what their practices are inclusive enough or how far they can go. The Salamanca statement and framework for action is too general and thus more fitting for broader applications. Then more confusion is created by the various theoretical interpretations by scholars for example the pragmatic (cautious) inclusion vs total (ideal) inclusion. This is compounded by countries in the west which act as ‘models’ and have different brands of Inclusion. The US model which has legal support (IDEA) is ‘heavier’ than the British brand.

Pakistan has no clear laws and guidelines for schools to follow as such teachers find themselves rudderless. All this is against the fact that contextual realities have to be taken into consideration.

The lack of clear benchmark might explain why the study shows that IE is enacted without a comprehensive plan. The will to include pupils with SEN was apparent but to turn beliefs into effective sustainable practice, a well laid out action plan was necessary. The teacher's efforts seemed to be reactive to the case of SEN available at the time rather than following a well laid out road map. For example the school retained a boy for more than a year when they felt that the efforts of the school were not yielding satisfactory results! A clear policy of Professional development, reflection, planning, assessment and placement would have made a difference.

The study showed that lack of professional certified teacher training and deep understanding of IE was a factor affecting the practices of teachers. This is prevalent in Pakistan. Both the teacher and Principal were not professional teachers. None of the other teachers had sufficient training in how to handle children with SEN except one therapist who used to visit the school but did not give guidance on the basics that can enable IE e.g. the theory of multiple intelligences, individualized attention and contemporary trends in IE.

The study showed that some beliefs are self-created and others acquired. Some beliefs are acquired from past experiences, which might some times be related to the context in question, or not. In this study, the teacher had acquired some inclusive beliefs from associating with a relative who had a disability so by the time she joined the school she already had IE beliefs in latent form. Her personal empathy and the religious teaching she had undergone also contributed. Thus, some times teachers come with already formed beliefs, which might ease incorporation of new ones. Some beliefs are acquired from training courses or direct induction. Though the teacher

came with some empathetic beliefs towards IE she needed the experience of working in an inclusive school and the training workshops she had attended at the Aga Khan Institute for educational development and else where to clarify or concretize her beliefs.

Recommendations

More government involvement is imperative if IE is to be enacted. IE is very expensive in terms of time and resources especially against the backdrop of societal negativity. Governments need to inject money into training nearly all teachers in handling SEN cases, training therapists and other specialized handlers to compliment the mainstream teachers. Such specialists should be on government payroll to off set their high professional fees and they should also be attached to all schools that are trying to enact IE. Institutions of higher learning like Universities need to put in place policies and programmes to fit various students with SEN to ensure that the IE efforts do not stop at lower levels of learning. Finally, the government should put up a campaign drive to ensure that the societal negativity towards the child with SEN is lessened. For example making it mandatory that all children irrespective of their SEN have to attend school and all the necessary policy, legal and financial support ensured to be in place.

Conclusion.

The study has revealed that indeed there is a relationship between teachers' beliefs in IE and their practices. However, the relationship is not always cause and effect relationship or linear in nature but some times fuzzy in nature especially since contextual realities and teachers' individualism impinge on the relationship. Such realities like societal perception, inadequate

government support and others need to be catered for before effective IE is instituted in developing countries like Pakistan.

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