Effective Teaching in Inclusive Classroom: Literature Review

Mohammad Sakarneh^{1*} Natheer Abu Nair²

- 1. Department of Special Education, Princess Rahma University College, Al-Balqa' Applied University,
- P.O. Box 371, Marj Al-Hamam, 11732 Amman. Jordan
- 2. Department of Education, Princess Rahma University College, Al-Balqa' Applied University, P.O. Box 371, Marj Al-Hamam, 11732 Amman. Jordan

* E-mail of the corresponding author: msakarneh@gmail.com

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the research findings concerning effective teaching in inclusive classroom. It is found that the practices of effective teaching and learning revolve around context. The concept and practices of effective teaching can be only discussed, and can only function, within a specific context. This context, as the literature suggests, has four main sub-contexts: teachers, students, the school, and the classroom teaching and learning practices. Within the human right and social justice movement of including students with special needs into the regular classroom; it found that there are different classroom teaching practices should be taking into account. These practices are: efficient use of time; good relationships with students; provides positive feedback; has a high student success rate; and in general provides support for the students with and without disabilities. This review does not claim to be comprehensive or definitive but is intended as a guide to the most important and influential research findings on effective teaching in inclusive classroom.

Keywords: effective teaching, inclusive classroom, literature review, special education

1. Introduction

The international move towards inclusion of special needs children into mainstreaming classrooms has been a main concern raising issues and interest for educators, policy-makers and researchers in recent times (Chalmers, 1998). Such new movement in the education arena created more challenges and pressure for the education stakeholders in general and in the inclusive classrooms in specific. Furthermore, the new trend in the inclusive education sparked numerous tringles of arguments about how the education stakeholders will face the new challenges in terms of the inclusive settings, teaching strategies and the teachers and many more.

For a long time, there have been arguments about which factors influence the student's achievement. Some researchers attribute the student's achievement to the school; others indicate that the school makes little impact on academic outcome. Other researchers claimed that the effective teacher is the only one who can play the main role in terms of student progress. However, all the factors (teacher, school context, classroom context and the community around the school) contribute or impact student's achievement. The effective school factors, which influence students, are: professional leadership, learning environment, high expectation, positive reinforcement, monitoring student's progress and parent-school co-operation (Ayres, Sawyer, & Dinham, 2004; Bentley, 2000; Dinham, Cairney, Craigie, & Wilson, 1995; Harris, 1999; Owens, 1998). The effective teaching or teacher's characteristics are: "lesson clarity, instructional variety, teacher task orientation, and engagement in the learning process and student success rate" (Borich, 2000 p.8). The effective teacher in the inclusive classroom possesses such characteristics as: efficient use of time; good relationships with students; provides positive feedback; has a high student success rate; and in general provides support for the students with and without disabilities (Larrivee, 1985). Therefore, this field of education still is opening for more knowledge to be explored and research to be conducted and demand calls for research papers to be contributed. Thus, this paper meant to be contribution in the field of inclusive education as a guide and knowledge for other researchers and education stakeholders.

2. Review Process

The examination of effective teaching in inclusive classrooms is a relatively new area of education research. Research articles were initially collected for this review using different educational databases. The databases differed in the exact search terminology, so a variety of terms were used such as effective teaching, inclusive education and classrooms, school context, education policy, effective learning, effective school and students' achievement. All English sources, including peer-reviewed articles, books dissertation abstracts and reports were screened to determine the concept of effective teaching and its implication. After locating a number of sources related to effective teaching in inclusive classrooms, the articles were screened to decide whether they directly addressed the concept of effective teaching. Because of the scarcity of peer-reviewed articles the researcher decided to include other literature such as books, dissertation abstracts and reports. First, the researcher began by reviewing the literature related to the inclusive education. Second, from the reviewing, the researcher discussed the inclusive classrooms.

Fourth, the researcher extracted the factors that can influence students' achievement.

3. Results

3.1 Human Rights and Social Justice

The message from International Year of Disabled People (IYDP) in 1981 was clear in terms of human rights for students who have disabilities, stating that students with disabilities didn't want their future decided by others or limited according to their disabilities. They have the right to demonstrate the most positive significant ability in their personality not their disabilities and have the right to receive an education to develop their skills. Also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 embodied this right (Foreman, 2001; Jenkinson, 1997). O'Brien (2001) argued that children with special education needs have the right to be educated in a full inclusive classroom, and should not be segregated for any reason. In addition there is different between those students to be accepted only and included as physical individuals, the reality should be accepted physically and morally without isolated them from their peers in regular classroom and preparing appropriate education which meets their needs (O'Brien, 2001). Social justice means all members of a society are treated equally including those who have disabilities. In the past, schools have dealt with special needs students in terms of their difficulties, without taking into account the community, which they are, part of. They are influenced by this community and they influence it as interchangeable relationships not labelling them as special people with special programs prepared for them may be because the law or the authorities (Foreman, 2001). Some, who advocate this inclusion, validate their argument by mentioning the advantages of inclusion. By including individuals with special needs civil rights can be achieved for those with disabilities, whereas separating them in special classes is not computable to the inclusion environment which has advantages in terms of the social relationship, communication, friendship, self-steam and confidence by reducing labelling or stigma. In other words by full inclusion schools do not need to pull-out the students for special services or special classrooms for a short time (resources room) which makes those students feel different to the others causing them to loose many important parts of the instruction, consequently leading to fragmentation and creating confusion between what they learn in the special and general classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 1996; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004). Furthermore, disabled people have the same rights and the same equality as other people in any society in terms of basic needs (physical needs), psychosocial needs and participation on the political level (Harris & Enfield, 2003). Behind the evolution of treating the people who have disabilities, there are socioeconomic and cultural factors. Following World War II, in the western countries unemployment influenced the population and people with disabilities struggled to alter their live demands, revolution in industries and economic sectors, which reflect positively in their daily lives. In affluent society, the people became concerned of changing their live of all the members of society and looking for success. Making the education system compulsory led to more demands and calls for participation of children with disabilities in the regular classroom with their peers at least from civil rights perspective (Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 1995). In Salamanca, Spain in 1994 more than 300 people representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations came together under the Spanish Government and UNESCO organization. In the final report (Salamanca statement) the Participants proclaim that: "Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all" (UNESCO, 1994 par 2).

3.2 Inclusive Outcome

Banerji and Dailey (1995) in their study about the effectiveness of an inclusive outcome on students with learning disabilities found that students with specific learning disabilities demonstrated academic progress at pace comparable to that of students did not possess such disabilities, in addition their teachers and parents indicated progress in self-esteem and motivation (Banerji & Dailey, 1995). Vaughn, Elbaum and Schumm (1996) in their study about social function of the students with learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom (peer acceptance, loneliness, self-concept and social alienation) found that such students demonstrated lower academic self-concept (Vaughn, Elbaum, & Schumm, 1996). In another study in terms of social outcome for students with and without learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom, Vaughn and colleagues (1998) found that students with learning disabilities obtained a positive outcome. According to the results the students on the consultation / collaborative teaching setting demonstrated a more positive outcome than their peers on the co-teaching setting (Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, & Hughes, 1998). However, in a study by Pavri and Lufting (2000); students with learning disabilities felt loneliness more than did their peers without learning disabilities and were more controversial in their social status and less popular (Pavri & Lufting, 2000). Stanovich and others (1998) conducted a study about the differences in terms of academic self-concept and peer acceptance in an inclusive classroom setting. The basic finding showed that the self-concept was the lowest among the students who were categorized in comparison to students who were non categorized, also the students who had disabilities and those whose native language was not English demonstrated low levels of social integration compared with those who

were identified as being at risk. Further, peer acceptance was significantly higher for the non-categorized students, the students who were at risk were accepted by their peers but had low perception in academic ability. and on other hand the students with disabilities rated higher in academic self-concept than in social closeness (Stanovich, Jordan, & Perot, 1998). Klingner and collegues (1998) conducted study about which program students prefer (pull-out or inclusion). In the study 32 students were interviewed individually by the researcher using key questions assessing their perceptions, the results indicated that more children prefer the pull-out model, but many children confident that the inclusive program was more useful in terms of the outcomes and social skill development (Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998). In another study about students' perception of inclusion, Vaughn and Kingner (1998) reviewed 8 studies examined the students perceptions by interviews and surveys using a sample of 442 students with learning disabilities and found that students liked going to the resources room because they thought work in the resources room was easy and fun and because they received special help, yet students also stated that they liked the inclusive classroom because they were able to make friends (Vaughn & Klingner, 1998). Also Klingner and Vaughn (1999) investigated the perceptions of 4,659 students from preschool to grade 12. They found that the students with high-incidence disabilities - in an inclusive classroom - wanted the same books, materials, activities, homework and group teaching as their peers without disabilities and it was also found that their peers agreed with them on the terms that everyone should learn fairly. Students appreciate a teacher who slows down the instruction, makes the concepts clear and teaches using learning strategies (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). Cook (2001) investigates teachers' attitudes toward their included students according the disability degree (mild and severe disability). The study sample consisted of 70 teachers Cook (2001) on the one hand found that students with severe disabilities were significantly over represented among teachers' nominations in the indifference category, on the other hand, students with mild disabilities were significantly over represented in the rejection category, also the results indicated that teachers demonstrated different attitudes depending on the degree of disability (Cook, 2001). Praisner (2003) surveyed 408 elementary school principals in order to determine their attitudes toward inclusion. It was found that 1:5 principals' attitudes were positive, when the variable of special education concepts had been taken into account. In this study it was positive relationship between the attitude and principals' experience and training (Praisner, 2003). In terms of effects of included students with disabilities on students without disabilities, a literature review by Paterson (2000) indicated that when students with disabilities are include in regular classrooms with their peers without disabilities "is neither detrimental nor beneficial on students without disabilities" in respect to academic achievement, but inclusion is useful in terms of the "social development" (Paterson, 2000 p.20).

3.3 Effective Teaching Practices

Teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom may be regarded, as a challenge for teachers accustomed to teaching in the regular classroom; therefore teachers should require the basic characteristics of effective teaching. To be a successful teacher in inclusive classrooms is not easy as the teacher is dealing with different abilities. Most of the effective teaching evidence comes from the research which involves the classrooms directly using several different techniques (Westwood, 1995). Westwood (1995) in his review of the literature on the effective teacher, found that the effective teacher should be a good classroom manager, focusing on academic skills, with good expectation, enthusiasm, using effective strategies to keep students on task and using variety of teaching and resources styles, covering the material content. Also the effective teacher uses easy presentation of material, is direct in teaching, explains and outlines instruction clearly, frequently observe what students are doing taking into account differences between the students and re-teaching when necessarily, give frequent feedback for all students and checks for understanding by using probing questions (Westwood, 1995). Stanovich and Jordan (1998) indicate that effective teachers who are able to monitor the classroom and the students' behaviour in their class also demonstrate the ability to use body language. Furthermore they are able to manage the instruction time for the students and themselves and have good expectations for the lesson and ensuring students' understanding by using questions and monitoring students' progress frequently (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Teachers' behaviour also has a significant link to students' achievement. Englert (1983) in a study on teacher effectiveness found that effective teachers had a high level of presentation and corrected student responses in a short time, also following the students error responses and informing the students of the correct response by giving the suitable feedback (Englert, 1983). Shanoski and Hranitz (1992) indicated that effective teachers are enthusiasm in their work, take care of the students and work cooperatively with parents. According to Shanoski and Hranitz; effective teachers are interest in participating on most committees in the school and in the community around the school, able to know the students' needs and supporting the individual differences, possessing high expectation, encourages the students to be optimistic about their ability, able to increase students' motivation, use different teaching strategies, have good communication skills, love their students and have knowledge about their subject and subject matter (Shanoski & Hranitz, 1992). Hattie (2002) claimed that expert teachers have sophisticated representation about what they teach, are able to solve problems without effecting the students personality and take time to understand the problem, and further can also make a decision in the suitable time and identify the important decisions. Expert teachers can prepare the optimal classroom climate by following the error and giving feedback, scan the classroom behaviour effectively and monitoring learning. Expert teachers are more able to monitor students' problems and assess their understanding whilst providing feedback at the same time, they can see the difficulties facing the students and build strategies and hypotheses and examine or test these strategies and the extent to which they are working by measuring students' outcomes, they respect their students, they have responsibility over their students, they motivate their students, they build self-concept and self-efficacy for their students, they have a positive influence on their students' outcome and lead the students through challenging tasks and they have content knowledge (Hattie, 2002). Effective teachers according to Murphy and others (2004) are patient, caring, respect their students, organize their classrooms, and as a result their students are enthusiastic (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004). In a study by Larrivee (1985) reported that students with special needs demonstrated a greater level of achievement in the mainstream classrooms when the teacher: used the time efficiently, his or her relationship with the students was good, gave the students positive feedback, made a high rate of success for learning tasks and responded for all students positively (Larrivee, 1985). In contrast, the students who had lowest achievement were in classrooms with a high degree of: off-task actions or behaviour, wasted in the time transition process, teachers criticised students' responses and when there was a low ability in terms of behaviour problems interventions (Larrivee, 1985). An effective teacher in an inclusive classroom has the ability and skills to plan for the content coverage and takes into account the difference between students by scope and sequences their objectives. Moreover, effective teachers have good strategies in taking advantage of time by maximizing academic time on- task and have good presentation skills and therefore making the presentation very clear and keeping the students active and engaged, monitoring the academic practices in the inclusive classroom with frequent questioning and giving immediate feedback are vital factors could influence teaching process (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004; Westwood, 2003). It is evident that the effective school plays an important role in students' outcome socially and academically. It is stated that "The most persuasive research suggests that student academic performance is strongly affected by school culture. Successful schools are found to have cultures that produce a climate or 'ethos' conductive to teaching and learning" (Purkey and Smith cited in Owens, 1998 p.93). Clark and colleagues (1995) indicate that an effective school reinforces students' performance, has a good work environment that meets the disabled students' needs, and gives the opportunity for all the students to become involved and participate in school activities (Clark et al., 1995).

Including students with disabilities and having the knowledge of how to treat them are important characteristics of the effective school. In this regard Ainscow (1991) mentioned that the effective school has effective leadership and staff able to deal with all students and their needs and optimistic that all students can progress and develop their abilities toward successful achievement. Effective school has a willingness to support its staff by meeting their needs and taking into account the curriculum and ensuring that the curriculum meets all the students needs and also effective school reviews its programmes (teachers, curriculum, students' progress) frequently (Ainscow, 1991). Successful teachers challenge students' abilities by setting good quality tasks, providing students with opportunities to choose their tasks, varying learning strategies and providing facilities that contribute to student learning (Ainscow, 1991).

3.4 Context of Effective Teaching

Effective teaching does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs in a physical space and this cannot be removed entirely from the related contexts. The whole education system contributes to the teaching – learning process and, if one section or part of the education system is isolated from the other parts, then students' achievements may be affected. With this understanding, Wang and Walberg (1991) reviewed the professional literature and surveyed experts in instruction and learning to develop an understanding of the variables that influence learning. Their final framework included 228 variables or factors categorized into six main categories: the context outside of the school, variables linked to the students, variables linked to the district or education system in the state including political factors, variables linked to the school, variables linked to the program design and, finally, student outcomes. Their analysis of these categories for effective learning environments showed that variables linked to the greatest importance, followed by the context outside of the school, then classroom climate and instruction, and then variables linked to the students. Variables linked to the school and district or state ranked as the least important overall (Wang & Walberg, 1991). In the mentioned study, the variables relating to the classroom and teaching still have a high rank or influence.

For a long time, there have been debates and questions about which factors influence students' achievements. Some researchers attribute students' achievements to the school, while others indicate that the school has little impact on academic outcomes. Other researchers indicate that the effective teacher plays the main role in terms of student progress. From the wide range of factors examined by extensive research, and the fact that this research makes claims that most of these contextual factors have at least some impact on student learning, it may be presumed that all contextual factors, such as the teacher, school context, classroom context

and school community, contribute something toward student achievement. Some researchers highlight further factors that may influence the teaching-learning process, including school reform, community dynamics, teacher attitudes, curriculum, school location, and student abilities and socio-economic backgrounds (Maxwell & Ninnes, 2000; Paterson, 2000).

Effective teaching operates within a complex teaching and learning context that can influence it in different ways. Effective teachers by themselves cannot work effectively and productively unless they are located in a supportive environment. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2005) stated that: 'the quality of teaching is determined not just by the "quality" of teachers... but also by the environment in which they work. [effective teachers] are not necessarily going to reach their potential in settings that do not provide appropriate support or sufficient challenge and reward' (p.7). Also, Stringfield and Teddlie (1988) conducted a longitudinal study at Louisiana school, the aim examine the conditions that influence student' achievement. They found that the conditions relating to the school had a significant effect on student achievement more so than the conditions of the teachers. Also, it was found that the socio-economic conditions, school and teacher factors could influence students' achievement (Stringfield & Teddlie, 1988). In terms of leadership, the study which mentioned above, found that the principals in effective schools were more active, had long plans for their schools, had a clear vision of how to achieve their goals for their schools, effectively concentrate, were involved about the classrooms in their schools and made the instruction processes more easy for the teachers and the students. In addition it was found that principals in effective schools usually remain close to the students in order to understanding the students and their needs. In terms of the connections between the effective schools and effective teaching, the researchers found that schools become more successful when the students receive from the teachers a good and an effective style of teaching, which thus increases the students' achievement (Stringfield & Teddlie, 1988).

In terms of school effectiveness, Teddlie and his colleagues (1989) indicate that the school and the teachers demonstrate the following effective teaching behaviours: Spending time on teaching the task, develop new ways of presenting material, practice independently, the school and the teachers have high expectations, encourage, giving feedback and reinforce the students frequently, minimizing the interruptions, controlling the students and all of the school in a positive manner, provide a friendly environment and thus the students work hard. In comparison an ineffective school has no such characteristics (Teddlie, Kirby, & Strinfield, 1989). In the school context, the principal plays the main role in school improvement and effectiveness, leading to the students' achievement. Dinham and his colleagues (1995) conducted case study into three schools in NSW and found that the principals had significant influence on the school climate and culture and also on school staff, which led to progress in the students' achievement (Dinham et al., 1995).

Meta-analysis of the research into the influence of schools and teacher on students achievement has been done by Marazano (2000) found that student achievement was influenced by three main factors: those relating to the school, those relating to the teacher and those relating to the student. The surprising thing in this meta-analysis is that the school-level factors account for 7% and the teacher - level factors account for 13%, whereas the students-factors account 80% overall (Marzano, 2000). In terms of leadership and its influence on the school outcome, Dinham and his colleagues (2004) conducted case study based on AESOP (An Exceptional Schooling Outcomes Project), it was found that the principals play the main role in school outcomes by providing suitable conditions for the teachers and students to do well in terms of schooling outcomes which reflect eventually on the students' achievement. Also according to Dinham's model of principal leadership, the effective or the successful principal has the following characteristics or responsibilities: they take into account the external environment and engage with it, they have aptitude, ability to change and creativity, they have a good interpersonal skills and are respected by staff and students, they have long term visions and they prepare themselves to work toward these, they have responsibility, trust and they are concerned about their teachers professional development, they support the students and co-operate with the teachers and other staff and they focus more on the students in terms of teaching and learning (Dinham, 2004b).

The 50-state survey by Darling-Hammond (2000) found that there was a significant relationship between teacher quality and students' achievement; in addition it was found that there was a strong relationship between students' achievement, and teacher preparation and qualification especially in reading and mathematics. Further, the survey found that a teacher's experience, creativity, enthusiasm, questioning skills, knowledge of the content, intelligence, planning for using the time and co-operation with colleagues contributed to an increasing student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In this sense, Dinham and his colleagues conducted a case study which included 19 effective teachers of high - achievement grade 12 students in NSW, Australia; and found that there were eight categories which influenced a student's achievement: "School background and students, subject faculty, personal qualities, relationships with students, professional development, resources and planning, classroom climate and teaching strategies" (Dinham, 2004a p.149).

Research-based conclusions about teacher behaviour and students achievement show that the following factors play the main role in student achievement: Opportunity to learn/content covered, role

definition/expectation/time allocation, classroom management/student engaged time, consistent success/ academic learning time, active learning, whole-class versus small-group versus individualized instruction, structuring, redundancy/sequencing, clarity, enthusiasm, pacing/ wait-time, difficulty level of questions, cognitive level of questions, clarity of question, post question wait-time, selecting the respondent, waiting for the student to respond, reacting to correct responses, reacting to partly correct responses, reacting to incorrect responses, reacting to "no response", reacting to student questions and comments, handling seatwork and homework assignments, grade level, student socio-economic status SES/ability/affect, teacher's intentions/ objectives (Brophy & Good, 1986 p.360-365).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the right of students with special needs to be educated in an inclusive classroom rather than educating them in an isolated environment has been a main concern raising, issues and interest for educators, policy-makers and researchers in recent times. Thus it is became the basic issue in terms of teaching students with special needs. Effective school and teachers characteristics influence positively students' achievement or outcome in an inclusive classroom. School characteristics could be: qualified leadership, learning environment, high expectation, positive reinforcement, monitoring student's progress and parent-school co-operation. Teacher characteristics such as: efficient use of time; good relationships with students; provides positive feedback; has a high student success rate; and in general provides support for the students with and without disabilities. All of that can only be operated in an appropriate educational context.

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