POLICY REVIEW

Education for Students with Disabilities

Abstract

The participation of students with special needs in schools has been part of a major discussion for many years. Inclusion of education means that all students are part of the school community, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. These students with special needs deserve to have full access to all resources and social interactions that are present in the general educative schools that would help them build a sense of belonging, promote positive self-esteem, and also build social skills. The main goal of many schools is to create a classroom that has a low-restrictive environment that meets the needs of all students including those with special needs such as (Dyslexia, Cerebral palsy, and non-verbal learning disabilities). Teachers should be taken to institutions that equip them with the right knowledge and skills that help them when handling students with special needs and accommodating different learning environments. They should also be aware of different disabilities, learning styles, and teaching strategies to provide support to each student. Schools should be designed to accommodate students with walking challenges or other physical challenges to help them with the ease of navigation which may include (ramps and elevators). While progress has been made in promoting inclusive education, challenges such as (limited resources, large class sizes, bullying from other students, and lack of enough training among the teachers and students) still persist. Eradicating stigma and misconception surrounding people with special needs is needed to foster a society where all individuals are embraced and valued for their unique abilities.

History

Special education was designed to meet the unique needs and abilities of exceptional students and it began in the 18th century. Before that time, people with disabilities were often mistaken as being possessed by evil powers, cursed, or simply stupid they were also placed in hospitals or other institutions that provided little or no education. At the beginning of the 18th century, this period also known as the Enlightenment period ideas about education started to rise. In 1760 Charles Michel L’Epee was one of the pioneers who founded the first public school for people with disabilities in France. His major concern was language and phonetics which were being taught in a different way as a tool for the blind and deaf students.

In Greek and Roman times, those with disabilities were used as servants or fools, some were put to death, dwarfs were used as clowns, and thrown off cliffs, and also fathers had the right to terminate their own children’s lives if they found out that they had disabilities. In 1990 Stainback came up with the method which he defined as inclusion which meant that education was for all students and appropriate educational programs for every student. This was a way that helped children to have the right to quality education and also help them build their self-esteem and also interact with each other. Technology has advanced significantly and brought great development such as communication devices, screen readers, and adaptive software such as (a Smart cane and the Braille Smartwatch).

Literature Review

The idea of inclusive education emerged after the evolution of human rights in the last few decades. This change was to bring justice and equality in education for children without disabilities and the ones who are disabled. It requires both adaptation and modification to the world of education based on the needs and potentials of students who express the aspects of education. The main focus in recent literature is revolved around the effects of inclusive education to promote positive outcomes for students with disabilities. They are also benefits of inclusive education such as socialization, self-esteem, discovery of one’s own talent and hobbies, and overall well-being. By analyzing the experiences of students, educators, and parents their aim is to uncover factors that contribute to a successful inclusive education.

Building the knowledge and capacity of teachers and other school staff is important in developing sustainable inclusion in schools. The evolution of an inclusive school culture depends on aligning the attitudes and behavior of staff (McMaster, 2015). When teachers appreciate inclusion and improve their own practice and also change their view on how they see their students this can allow any unhelpful beliefs that may unconsciously inform their teaching practice, mostly in relation to students living with disability. However, in inclusive classrooms, teachers must develop the knowledge and skills that accommodate and also enable students with unidentified disabilities and more complex needs to engage with the curriculum as their other peers.

As students with disabilities approach adulthood there is a growing focus on transition services and post-school outcomes. Studies have had some effect on transition programs in preparing students for higher education, employment, and independent living. Education for students with disabilities is an evolving phase that continues to shape the lives of countless individuals. Through this review, we have gained valuable insights into the various aspects of inclusive education and policy development. Researchers and educators continue to build knowledge and strive to create educational environments that foster inclusivity and empower students with disabilities to reach their full potential.

Conclusion

Education for students with disabilities has been a journey toward inclusivity, equality, and empowerment. Over the years the evolution of policies such as the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) has been made in reshaping, accommodating, and supporting effective learning environments for students with different abilities. Inclusive education not only benefits students with disabilities but also non-disabled peers with understanding and a sense of community, and it nurtures them with empathy. Proper training and professional development among teachers and educators have been identified as crucial factors to diverse learning and diverse learning needs creating a more inclusive atmosphere. By embracing technology teachers can meet the unique needs of every student by helping them reach their full potential. Parents and caregivers also play a crucial role in the lives of students with disabilities by ensuring that students receive comprehensive support at home. Challenges persist for students with disabilities by addressing the issues of accessibility, resources, and attitudes towards disability we can strengthen educational practices and promote a more equitable learning environment for all.