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Inclusive Educational Measures for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Attending some Primary Schools in Ho Chi Minh City

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ABSTRACT: Inclusive education for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in primary schools is becoming a crucial requirement in the context of current educational reforms. This paper focuses on analyzing the theoretical foundations, learning characteristics, and behaviors of children with ASD in the primary school classroom environment, while also assessing the difficulties faced by teachers and schools in organizing inclusive education. Based on the research, several appropriate inclusive education measures are proposed. The research results contribute to improving the effectiveness of inclusive education, creating conditions for children with ASD to develop their learning abilities, social skills, and integrate better into the school environment.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive education, Autism spectrum disorder, elementary school

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, inclusive education for children with special educational needs, especially those with autism spectrum disorder, has received increasing attention within the education system. Children with autism spectrum disorder often face numerous difficulties in communication, social interaction, behavior, and adapting to the learning environment. When participating in inclusive primary schools, they not only face challenges in acquiring knowledge but also encounter many obstacles in integrating with peers and the classroom environment.

In reality, the number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) attending primary schools is increasing. However, organizing inclusive education for this group of children in primary schools still faces many difficulties, such as teachers lacking sufficient knowledge and professional skills, a lack of educational methods appropriate to the children's developmental characteristics, and ineffective coordination between schools, families, and support forces. This significantly affects the quality of education and the developmental potential of children with ASD in the school environment.

Stemming from the demands of educational practice and the need to support children with autism spectrum disorder in effective learning within the primary school environment, research and the proposal of appropriate inclusive education measures are essential.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

To conduct research on inclusive education measures for children with autism spectrum disorder attending primary schools, this paper employs the following main research methods:

Theoretical research method: Collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing scientific documents, policy texts, and research works from both domestic and international sources related to inclusive education, the characteristics of children with autism spectrum disorder, and support measures in the primary school environment. This method aims to build a theoretical foundation for the research.

Pedagogical observation method: Observing the learning activities, behavior, and level of participation of children with autism spectrum disorder in inclusive classrooms to assess the practical application of educational measures and the children's adaptation to the school environment.

Interview Methodology: Semi-structured interviews (a qualitative data collection method using a pre-prepared list of topics or open-ended questions) were conducted with teachers and parents to gather more in-depth information about the difficulties, support needs, and practical experiences in inclusive education for children with autism spectrum disorder.

In addition, the article also refers to relevant national and international documents and reports related to the research content to compare and draw lessons learned that are appropriate for the Vietnamese educational context.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Related concepts

- The concept of inclusive education is an educational approach in which children with disabilities learn alongside typically developing children in mainstream schools in their own communities. Inclusive education is based on a societal perspective on the understanding of children with disabilities. The causes of disability are not solely due to the individual's own impairment but also to limitations in the support system within society. For example, children with motor disabilities such as paralysis will lose their abilities if they lack transportation, are unable to participate in social activities, and will become disabled if they are not cared for and assisted. However, if these same children receive support, have transportation, and if society provides suitable facilities that do not create difficulties (such as easy access for wheelchairs), and can participate in activities, then they will have equal opportunities and the same chance of development as all other children.

- "**Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** is a complex developmental condition involving persistent challenges with social communication, restricted interests and repetitive behavior. While autism is considered a lifelong condition, the need for services and supports because of these challenges varies among individuals with autism" (**Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), n.d)**.

Autism in children was discovered and described by Leo Kanner (USA, 1943) in his article "Autistic disturbances of affective contact," and the term was later developed and confirmed by Hans Asperger (Austria, 1944) in his work "Autistic psychopathy in childhood."

Therefore, it can be affirmed that ASD is a disease, and it is an early-onset disorder in children, characterized by delays and deviations in social, communication, and other skill development. A typical feature is that, while children lack interest in the social environment, they exhibit unusual and abnormal responses to the inanimate environment.

Based on the above concepts, we can define autism spectrum disorder as follows: autism is a multiple disorder syndrome, manifesting as developmental disturbances in behavior, cognition, emotions, interests, thoughts, speech, senses, and social relationships; it is more or less accompanied by intellectual disability.

3.2. Causes of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children:

Currently, autism spectrum disorder remains one of the major challenges in the field of neurodevelopment, with the specific causes not yet clearly identified. However, many studies have shown that there are risk factors that can increase the likelihood of autism in children. Below are some of the main risk factors that have been noted:

STT	Reason
1	Genetic factors
2	Improper use of medication
3	Illnesses during pregnancy
4	Gestational diabetes
5	Environmental pollution
6	Vitamin and nutrient deficiencies
7	Premature birth
8	Timing of medical intervention
9	Unhealthy living environment
10	Domestic violence and stress

(*Source: The author referenced research by Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thi Hoang Yen, a specialist in special education in Vietnam, in her research on autistic children)*

3.3. The significance of inclusive education for children with developmental disorders in primary schools.

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often face significant disadvantages in cognitive abilities, communication skills, and other basic social needs. Implementing inclusive education for ASD children in primary schools is of great importance. Firstly, inclusive education for ASD children demonstrates the international commitment to education for all, as clearly stated in

Vietnam's Education Law and in the policies of the Ministry of Education and Training. This reflects the responsibility and concern of schools, families, and society for children with disabilities.

Implementing inclusive education in primary schools not only lays the foundation for children's development of knowledge, qualities, and abilities, helping them integrate better from primary school to higher levels of education, but also helps them adapt to society. In particular, inclusive education meets the needs and abilities of children, helping them integrate into the formal school environment. This avoids the risk of children not being integrated into the school environment, leading them to seek integration into negative social environments outside without the guidance of adults and educators.

In summary, inclusive education for children with developmental disorders is not only a national task but also a shared responsibility of the entire society, aiming to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop and integrate in a comprehensive and positive way.

3.4. Inclusive education measures for children with developmental disorders in primary schools

3.4.1. Developing communication and social interaction skills for children with developmental disorders

Developing communication skills through specific experimentation (DTT):

- Example: To teach children about circles, the teacher will give the command "Touch the circle," reminding the child by holding their hand and pointing to the circle. If the child does it correctly, they will be reinforced with a reward, which could be praise or a treat such as a toy or candy. Random teaching:

- Teachers don't teach using fixed lesson plans but rather through real-life situations. - For example: In a group discussion, if a child is not focused, the teacher can encourage other students to ask questions, helping the child understand the context and adjust their behavior. Individualized Education Plan:

- Each child will have a personalized education plan based on an assessment of their communication and social interaction abilities. Skills to be developed are gathered from parents, teachers, and social skills assessment charts.

- For example: Children may need to practice skills such as initiating conversations, maintaining conversations, and participating in games with friends. Regular assessment: - Use tools such as the Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS) or the Gilliam Scale (GARS) to assess communication skills, social interaction, and autism spectrum disorder levels. This helps identify precisely the skills a child needs to improve.

- For example: a child may need to develop communication skills through recognizing abstract language or responding to simple questions.

3.4.2. Strengthening coordination among families, schools, and society; early detection and intervention.

- Children are focused on developing early communication skills such as concentration, imitation of behavior, and skills in playing with toys or other children. For example, children are encouraged to take turns playing with friends to learn how to communicate and interact. Behavioral intervention (ABA): - ABA helps control negative behaviors by analyzing and modifying children's behavior. The intervention program includes activities ranging from simple to complex and can last from 1-3 years.

- For example, teachers can use behavioral assessment scales to track a child's progress throughout each lesson. Sensory Regulation:

- Children with autism often have difficulty processing senses such as hearing, sight, and touch. Sensory regulation helps children adapt to environmental stimuli through exercises such as listening to music and performing visual and auditory exercises to improve concentration and interaction.

- For example, children may wear colored glasses to help correct abnormal visual responses, or participate in music listening exercises to improve their auditory processing abilities. Individualized inclusive education:

- Each child with autism spectrum disorder has a personalized educational plan, depending on their abilities and needs. This plan includes developing communication, behavioral, and social skills through appropriate methods, such as using pictures to communicate or practicing patience in interactions with peers.

- For example: A child who has difficulty staying calm in social interactions might have a plan focused on developing emotional control skills, while another child might need to develop language skills through lessons using pictures to communicate. Collaboration between school, family, and society:

- Collaboration between teachers, families, and social organizations helps create the best learning and development environment for children. Social organizations also participate in organizing events and activities that give children with developmental disorders opportunities to communicate and integrate into the community.

- For example, charitable organizations or community groups can organize social events to help children with intellectual disabilities have opportunities to interact and integrate with friends and society.

3.4.3. Enhancing infrastructure at primary schools.

Building specialized classrooms:

- Sensory therapy room: This room will be equipped with devices to help children relax and practice their senses, such as light and sound. - Language and behavior therapy room: Children with autism spectrum disorder will have difficulty communicating, so to express themselves better, they can use images to express their desires and thoughts. Designing a friendly space:

- Quiet learning space: Children need to learn in a quiet and peaceful space because they are often sensitive to sound and light.

- Outdoor play space: Exposure to the surrounding environment will help children become more agile, but safety should be considered, avoiding sharp objects and preparing games that stimulate children's senses. Technological support:

- Personal equipment: Tablets or laptops will support teachers in developing children's communication skills. Teaching and learning aids: Projectors, smart boards, or interactive devices help students absorb lessons in a lively way and are appropriate to each child's abilities.

3.4.4. Teacher professional development

- Raising awareness among staff: Teachers' awareness greatly influences the effectiveness of education in the school. If everyone has the right and clear understanding, the work will be carried out smoothly and effectively. Professional development for teachers: Teachers participate in training courses and workshops organized by the education sector. After attending workshops, in group meetings, teachers analyze how the topics will be applied appropriately to the school's situation and the characteristics of students in each class, avoiding rigid and mechanical application. The school organizes monthly workshops, paying particular attention to topics that apply information technology to teaching (computerized lesson planning, teaching using PowerPoint).

Enhancing the role of classroom observation and visits: The school administration regularly observes and visits classes to assist teachers (with prior notice), creating a stable atmosphere for teachers and immediately resolving any problems or difficulties they encounter in each specific lesson.

3.4.5. Cognitive support for typically developing children with ADHD

Connecting and building a circle of friends is a crucial element in promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities, especially those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

There's a proverb that says, "Learning from a teacher is not as good as learning from a friend," and this has been proven in practice, not only in inclusive education programs in general but also in activities supporting inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities. Students helping each other in their studies benefits not only those being helped but also those providing the help. Children help each other more easily because they share a common language, using their own language and expressions, making communication more natural and effective. Children don't feel self-conscious when receiving help from their peers, something adults cannot replicate. In addition to classroom support, extracurricular activities should be enhanced to provide opportunities for typical students to interact, play, and learn alongside children with developmental disorders. Through these activities, children with developmental disorders will have the chance to overcome feelings of inferiority and self-doubt, and develop communication skills quickly. Extracurricular activities not only help children develop independence in their daily lives but also help them learn and absorb more knowledge. They will become more confident when participating in group activities, thereby improving their social skills and ability to integrate into the learning environment and community.

Creating an inclusive learning and play environment benefits not only children with intellectual disabilities but also offers numerous advantages to typical students. They will learn respect and empathy for those with special needs, thereby building a united and close-knit school community. Teachers and schools should regularly organize social gatherings, group activities, and sports and arts events to strengthen connections among students. Furthermore, opportunities should be provided for children with intellectual disabilities to participate in clubs and groups, giving them more opportunities to develop their skills and abilities. In this context, the role of teachers is crucial. They need to be trained to understand and be sensitive to the special needs of children with intellectual disabilities, thereby creating appropriate teaching methods and activities. Teachers are not only guides but also bridges that help children with developmental disorders connect with their classmates, encouraging active participation and support in group activities. In this way, inclusive education will truly be effective, helping children with developmental disorders develop holistically and integrate naturally and sustainably into the school community.

3.4.6. Cognitive support for families of typically developing children with RLPTK

Inclusive education cannot succeed without the consensus and interest of parents in general, and parents of typically developing students in particular. Parents need to recognize that a good educational environment is not just about providing knowledge, but also about ensuring equality, friendliness, and creating opportunities for all students to develop together. That educational environment must guarantee the rights and interests of all students, including children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Parental consensus and support are key to creating an inclusive learning environment. When parents understand and empathize with the challenges faced by families with children with ADHD, they are more likely to actively and effectively participate in inclusive education activities. This understanding helps create a supportive and empathetic environment where children can reach their full potential. Parents of typically developing students also need to be fully and clearly informed about the benefits of inclusive education. When their children learn alongside children with ADHD, they will learn empathy, compassion, and important social skills.

Typical students will understand that everyone has their own value and that they can learn a lot from their unique peers. This not only contributes to character building but also helps create a united, close-knit, and thriving school community. Schools need to organize workshops and meetings with parents to explain the importance of inclusive education, the educational methods applied, and the positive results this method brings. Communication programs, leaflets, and extracurricular activities should also be used to raise awareness and change parents' attitudes towards inclusive education. When parents truly understand and support inclusive education, it will become easier and more effective.

In summary, parental consent and cooperation are key factors in the success of inclusive education. Through understanding and empathy, parents can help create a holistic educational environment where all students, including children with developmental disorders, have the best opportunity to develop and integrate into the community.

3.4.7. Applying appropriate educational programs and methods for children with developmental disorders.

- Objective: To help children access appropriate modern programs and methods to support their integration into society and the community.

- Implementation content: Selectively use educational programs suitable for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD): Apply educational programs from around the world, with adjustments to suit Vietnamese culture and style. Programs that can be applied in Vietnam include: Small Step, Catherine Maurice's Behavioral Intervention for Autistic Children, and PEP-R. In addition, there are programs to provide free consultations for children to promptly identify and support them when they encounter difficulties. Organize seminars where experts will visit and provide support to children at the school. Teaching methods in schools with children with developmental disorders are also extremely important, focusing on behavior, expression, and communication skills to develop appropriate methods. For example, children can be introduced to one-on-one communication with the teacher to improve their communication skills and develop their thinking abilities through simple exercises. It's also necessary to encourage and support children when they lack motivation, and create a friendly classroom environment so they don't feel isolated.

3.4.8. Propose recommendations to ensure the correct and full implementation of regulations and policies for inclusive education teachers.

- Objective: To implement correctly, fully, and promptly the regulations and policies for teachers involved in educating students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This is of great importance, demonstrating the concern of the State and all levels of government for the team of teachers who are carrying out the task of educating students with disabilities, contributing to motivating their morale and improving the effectiveness of their work.

- Content and implementation: In briefing conferences and meetings related to education, the Department of Education and Training, together with the leaders of preschools, continuously proposes the following measures to leaders at all levels and relevant sectors:

Implement policies and regulations for teachers teaching inclusive education for children with disabilities according to Government Decree No. 28/2012/ND-CP.

Balance the budget and provide financial support for school administrators and teachers to participate in training and professional development in inclusive education. Develop a separate mechanism for considering early salary increases for administrators and teachers who are active, dedicated, and have achieved success in inclusive education for students with disabilities.

Consider the recruitment of teachers with specialized training in inclusive education (if available). Create conditions and provide financial support for inclusive education teachers to visit and learn from advanced inclusive education models for students with disabilities in other localities. Promote the nationwide effort to care for the cause of education, including mobilizing both material and spiritual support for inclusive education teachers. Through these specific measures, the goal of educating students with learning disabilities will be effectively achieved, while ensuring the rights and motivating the teaching staff to work with peace of mind and perform their duties even better.

4. CONCLUDE

Inclusive education for children with autism spectrum disorder in primary schools is crucial in creating equal learning opportunities and promoting their holistic development. However, organizing inclusive education for this group still faces many challenges related to the children's developmental characteristics, the teachers' capacity to provide support, and the educational conditions within the school.

Based on theoretical and practical analysis, the study proposed several appropriate inclusive education measures to support children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in participating more effectively in learning and activities within the primary school environment. Implementing these measures requires close coordination among teachers, schools, families, and experts to create a positive educational environment that supports children's learning abilities, social skills, and enhances their integration into the community. The research findings contribute to providing a reference basis for improving the quality of inclusive education for children with ASD in primary schools.

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