

Mainstreaming in Education Advantages and Disadvantages

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Abstract - The advantages and disadvantages of Mainstreaming lead to an overview of the types of disabilities, benefits of Mainstreaming classes, and characteristics of the teachers who teach these classes. This research presents many of keys for comparison between different Types of Disabilities in the Mainstreaming environment.

Keywords: *Mainstreaming, Education, Inclusion, Children, and Disability.*

Introduction

All around the world people agree that education is a right for everyone, especially children. However, some children are unlike others have health issues. Their issues sometimes prevent them to join regular students' schools, but they still have the education right.

Disabled children need to learn. According to Bartlett & Weisenstein, et al (2002), people, in the late 1700s, which was called the age of enlightenment started to understand that disabled people could learn, so they built schools for deaf and blind students. Since that date until the early 20th century, the education development was struggling. After that, in the middle of the 20th century, the civil rights movement and the development of organizations of parents and supporters of students with disabilities fought against the schools that segregated the disabled students until the 1960s and 1970s. At this point, the United States legislated some law to protect the disabilities' right and allow them to attend the school with regular children (7-9). The advantages and disadvantages of Mainstreaming lead to an overview of the types of disabilities, benefits of Mainstreaming classes, and characteristics of the teachers who teach these classes.

Definition of Key Terms

There are four terms in this paper is important to know. The first term is "**Mainstreaming** has been used to refer to the selective placement of special education in one or more 'regular' education classes" (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2014). The second term is "**Inclusion** is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend, it involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students)" (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2014). The difference between these two terms is that inclusion puts the children with disabilities directly into regular children classrooms; in contrast, mainstream prepares the children with disabilities in special education environment in order to join regular children classrooms. The both terms have the same concept which is combined the children with disabilities and regular children in the same classes. Next term is "**Children with Disabilities** are those children who have been evaluated and found to have one of the following disabilities: mental retardation, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, specific learning disability; deaf-blindness or multiple disabilities and who because of that disability need special education and related services" (Bartlett & Weisenstein, et al, 2002, 12). These children who are with disabilities need what is called "**Special Education.**" The last term is "Special Education is defined in the IDEA (The Individual with Disabilities Education Act) as 'specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in the hospitals and institutions, and in other settings'" (Bartlett & Weisenstein, et al, 2002, 12).

Comparison Study

Advantages and Disadvantages of Mainstreaming

As any system, concept, or method in this life, Mainstreaming or Inclusion has positive and negative influences on the students who are disabled and not disabled in general. This makes people have different opinions. "Some say the practice of

mainstreaming students with disabilities in regular classrooms is a controversial subject. Some say it benefits all students; others say it is a cost-cutting trick that denies services" (Baker, 2013). To clarify this subject, there is a question should be asked. What are some advantages and disadvantages of Mainstreaming or Inclusion? The answer of this question is as the following.

☒ Advantages

Not only does Mainstreaming or Inclusion have advantages for the disabled students, but also it has advantages for the regular or nondisabled students. The first advantage that the regular student can earn from Mainstreaming is as Baker (2013) states, "In a TEACH magazine article about his new book, Adelman says inclusion of students with disabilities benefits entire student bodies by teaching kids about diversity in the real world and helping them develop empathy." The second advantage of Mainstreaming is "Friends must learn to accept one another's limitations and flaws and to complement one another's weaknesses by contributing their strengths. Friends also quickly learn that superficial differences are far less important than shared values, trust and humor." Adelman wrote" (Baker, 2013). However, disabled students or children have strengths too. They do their best to learn. Therefore, they take their opportunities to study and learn with their classmates in the regular classroom (Baker, 2013). Furthermore, Inclusion helps disabled children to have confidence in themselves. Brown, (2014) says, "The handicapped children develop positive self-concepts by becoming member of the total group, as opposed to the ostracism and segregation that characterized the programs of the past (Schattman & Benay, 1992)" (4).

In the meantime, Inclusion has advantages for the teachers who teach both disabled and nondisabled students. In this type of school, teachers have chances to meet other teachers who are special education teachers and learn from them. Therefore, teachers interact with the disabled students, nondisabled students, and special education teachers, and they gain new information (Brown, 2014, 5). On the other hand, Mainstreaming has negative effects on the disabled students.

☒ Disadvantages

The disadvantages of Mainstreaming are limited in three parts, which are: The disabled students themselves, teachers, and costs. The Mainstreaming can influence the disabled students by preventing them from not receiving the knowledge that they need. In other word, students with disabilities cannot keep themselves with the same level of regular students. "A few special education students, because of profound handicapped conditions, cannot make a successful transition into the regular classroom. Although being in the regular classroom should provided the opportunity for peer acceptance of handicapped children by nonlabeled children, research findings are still contradictory on this issue (Bergen, 1993: Roberts & Zubrick, 1993)" (Brown, 2014, 5).

The second part is which can be affected by Mainstreaming is the teachers. It is very clear that children with disabilities need a person who has special qualifications to teach these students. In fact, not everyone has these capabilities of teaching the disabled students. Therefore, some teachers might lose their jobs. They lose their jobs because of the lack of proficiency of interacting with disabled students, as referred to in Friend & Cook, 1992 (Brown, 2014, 5).

Finally, the last part is the cost of Mainstreaming. Because some school buildings need changes to accommodate the disabled students' needs; some teachers need to get special training and others changes may be needed, the installation of mainstreaming system in the school is expensive (Gordon, 2013, 760).

☒ Types of Disabilities

What types of disabled students can be accepted in a Mainstreaming program? First of all, there are two categories of disability. The first type is defined by the United States Federal law. Therefore, children are categorized disabled if they meet two conditions. Children have disabilities, and they need special education which connected to their impairments. "Eligibility has two requirements, a child must have a disability, as defined by law, and must also need special education and related services as a result of the disability" (Bartlett & Weisenstein, et al, 2002, 12). Now, what are these types of disability that federal law defined? According to Friend & Bursuck, (2002), they are explained as follows (Minto, R., & Trenow, P. 2019), (Roby, H., & Dibb, S. 2019) and (Russel, D. 2019):

☑ Categories of Disability in Federal Law

The first type is **Learning disabilities (LD)**. The children who have this type of disability have a disorder in language-based activity. For example, they have difficulty in reading words, describing pictures, answering questions, following directions, and managing time. They also seem inactive. However, they have normal intelligence or above, and they do their best to learn. The second type is **Speech or Language impairments**. The children's problems in this type are that they cannot express themselves by using words, or they skip another word. In other word, the fluency of speaking is their obstacle. Sometimes, the picture or the sign language is the best approach for communication between others.

☑ Mental retardation

It is the third type of disability according to federal law category. It is also called a Cognitive disability, which means that children's capabilities of learning are limited. They will reach a certain point in that they will not be able to learn more. Their rate of learning is too slow. It has two kinds mild and severe mental retardation. The children who have this type of disability can have chances to establish their lives completely or partly independent, which means that they can have suitable jobs.

☑ Emotional disturbance (ED)

It is another type of disability that makes children eligible to join a Mainstreaming program.

Basically, ED is an overreaction or inappropriate reaction about something children with ED have a hard time making new friends or keeping their friends. For instance, children do not show any expression when they lose their pets because of death. On the other hand, they show irritation because their friends make joke on them. The opposite of ED is **Autism**. These children miss social responses, escape from physical or eye contact, are not concerned about people's feelings; these properties describe children who have Autism. Yet they are above-average in intelligence. In addition to that, they omit the intonation when they speak, so they almost have different language from the others.

☑ Hearing impairments

They are divided into two parts. The both parts have one common thing that is the weakness of hearing. However, the differences are the first part; **hard hearing**, can be controlled by the technology, such as hearing aids while the second part, **deafness**, cannot be overcome by the technology. Besides hearing impairment, there are **Visual impairments**. It is another type of disability that is defined by the United States federal law. Like hearing impairments, visual impairments also have two sides. The first one can be manipulated by technology, and that is called **partially sighted**. On the other hand, the second part cannot be overcome by technology, and it is called **blindness**. However, visual impairments are weakness of seeing. Furthermore, there are children who are afflicted with both, deafness and blindness. The name of this type of disability is **Deaf-blindness**, but this type cannot join Mainstreaming classroom because it is considered a severe disability.

Five additional types of disabilities are referred to in (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, 18-24) include: Orthopedic impairment, which is disability of movement result of "cerebral palsy" and/or "other diseases that affect the skeleton or muscles."

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) the students' characteristics for this type of disability are diverse, such as "development delays, short-memory problems, and hearing or vision losses." The children who suffer from this type, "their needs often changed by time."

Other health impairments include many health problems that need special education, such as Asthma, chronic heart condition, AIDS, sickle-cell anemia, and diabetes.

Multiple disabilities mean that children could have more than one disability, however, these disabilities cannot be classified as a primary disability.

Developmental disabilities this type of disability is depending on the states' law. Some states range the children's ages from three to five or three to nine. This type of disability includes young children who have "delays in physical, cognitive, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive development."

Unfortunately, this category cannot help the teachers to determine children's capabilities. Moreover, many different types of disabilities can benefit from combining together (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, 24-25). Therefore, the next category is more effective than the previous one; it is called Cross- Categorical Approaches to Special Education.

☑ **Cross-Categorical Approaches to Special Education**

This kind of category divides disabled children into two groups. The first group is named **High- incidence disabilities** that contains "learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mild mental retardation, and emotional disturbance." The second group is **Low-incidence disabilities**; it contains the others types of disability, which are: "moderate to severe mental retardation, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, visual impairments, deaf- blindness, autism, traumatic brain injury, and developmental delays" (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, 24-25).

☑ **Benefits of Mainstreaming Classes**

Sometime, a perfect proof to convince people is a real example. Here is an example from the real life about a disabled student who joins a regular class that shows what disabled and nondisabled students can benefit from Mainstreaming.

Case Study

Peter's Experience

As was shown in the video (Educating peter [video], 2006), Peter, in the third grade in Gilbert Linkous Elementary School in Blacksburg, Virginia, has Down syndrome. In the first day, students in his classroom are scared because they see him as a different person. His teacher is also scared because she does not know how she does with him. By the end of the first week, the teacher asks herself if she can do this, teaching peter, all year long. The students also do not accept him because he is pushing and kicking them, and they do not know what they do with him. In the third week, the teacher asks for help. She also asks the students to ignore him if he does something wrong, but not if he does something right. When the seventh week comes, students take some responsibility in the classroom with Peter as the teacher asks before. However, Peter's mother says that Peter is so happy when he comes from the school. He smiles and hums even though he is so tired. By the fourth month, his teacher starts to change her expectation as she says from "I am not sure about things that I want you to do" to "I expect you to do these things because I know that you can do it." At the beginning, he feels a little loss. He cannot do what his classmates are doing. On the other side, the girls play the mother's role by taking care of him especially, in eating time. Peter starts to understand what his classmates are doing in the sixth month. He knows how to read, run, catch, and interact with others. However, even the seventh month was finished, Peter still does something wrong but when he gets tired, that at the end of the school day. Last month of the school is different. Peter has changed significantly.

Analysis Peter's Experience

This experience has much evidence that Mainstreaming is effective. At the end of the movie (Educating Peter [video], 2006) one student who is Peter's classmate, says, "You think you are teaching him; but really Peter is teaching you. He teaches us how to think and how to react to other's problems." Even though Peter has a disability, his classmates learn from him. They learn how to take care of someone who needs help. They feed him, teach him how to read and write. They teach him good behavior. They think of some ways to control his misbehavior and improve it. As a result, they earn a life experience from him. On the other hand, Peter learns how to respect other people. He finds out what polite and impolite are. Finally, Peter's teacher says, students, by which she means regular students, accept other children. They want him, Peter, in the class every day. That means, the differences between the disabled students and nondisabled students disappear when they are integrated into one classroom together. They do their best to learn new things about their lives. Peter's experience is an example of Mainstreaming with disability.

Teachers' Characteristics

There is no doubt that teaching students in school needs hard work. Certainly, teaching students starts from their houses with their parents, and ends in the schools. It is a team that consists of "Teachers, administrators, parents, and leader of the community (York, Doyle, & Kronberg, 1992)" (Brown, 2014, 3). The main goal of this team is that "all persons involved with any child's instruction share the responsibility for developing and implementing the child's individualized Education Plan (IEP)" (Brown, 2014, 3). However, not all team members work directly, except the teachers. "You will probably interact with

some of the professionals, such as special education teachers, almost every day. Others you might work with only occasionally" (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, 32). There are two types of teachers who teach the Mainstreaming classrooms.

The first type is **General Education Teachers** who play a very important role in the disabled student's life. Because they spend the whole day with the students in the classroom, and they observe the students' grade, they know which student acts differently than the others, which one whose progress is slow, so they can identify disabled students in the class. After that, teachers consult special education teachers to decide whether these students need special education or not. Then, if the students' cases need special services, the teachers are responsible for taking care of the students inside the classroom. Finally, the team (parents, the school principal, teachers, and special education teachers) designs a program for these students (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, 32-34).

The second type of teacher who teaches the Mainstreaming classrooms is **Special Education Teachers**. The main task that special education teachers do is to design, implement, and manage the **Individual Education Program (IEP)**. Some of them work directly with the students, and the others do not; but, all of them work with the general education teachers. Some of them deal with one type of disability, and others handle more than one type. Even though they work with many types of disability, the type of service they provide categorizes them. They are divided into five types. The first one is a **Consulting teacher** that "might meet with you regularly to monitor student progress and address your concerns about the students but might not directly teach them." The next type is "a **Resource teacher** who might divide time between directly instructing students and working with teachers." The third type is an **Inclusion specialist** or **Support facilitator**, whose tasks are to direct students, to find solutions for the teachers' problems, to arrange the students' services especially whose disabilities are severe. Another type of special education teacher is an **Itinerant teacher** who visit many school to help students who endure vision or hearing disabilities. The last type is a **Transition specialist** who prepares special needs to their careers. It is called a **Job coach** because regardless of the students' disabilities types, it is responsible for finding a suitable job environment for disabled students (Friend & Bursuck, 2002, 34-36).

Conclusion

In conclusion, disabled children have rights as regular children. One of their rights is their opportunity to learn, equally with regular children in a same classroom. Both disabled and nondisabled children receive the positive and the negative outcomes of Mainstreaming. The positive outcomes are: to help regular students to accept disabled students and help them to beat their impairments. Another benefit is to teach the regular students that there are differences between people and similarities as well. The disabled students, on the other hand, build their self-esteem. In addition to that, they work hard to learn as much as the regular students do. Meanwhile, disabled students start to prepare themselves to face the real life. Beside students, teachers also learn from Mainstreaming classrooms. They improve their teaching skills and styles. They learn how to communicate with different types of students at the same time. In contrast, the negative outcomes of Mainstreaming can be summarized into a few points. For example, disabled students can feel lost because they do not have the same learning ability as the regular students do. In other words, disabled students' progress in learning is slower than regular student, so they may not get everything they need from the teachers as the regular students. Furthermore, Mainstreaming causes some obstacles. Indeed, teachers can lose their jobs because some teachers are not qualified to teach disabled students. The last negative outcome is Mainstreaming's cost is overpriced.

Disability has many types, and it is categorized by different styles. Therefore, there are different types of teachers who teach disabled children. All of these have results and answer one question; what are the advantages and disadvantages of Mainstreaming? Everyone can get benefits from Mainstreaming especially, the nondisabled students. There are some areas that the future researchers may wish to investigate. It is related to nondisabled children. For example, do the regular children need time to adapt with the disabled students in one classroom? What can we do for the regular children to help them accept the disabled children easily? Is there any training course for them to help them accommodate disabled children quickly?

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