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https://www.int-jecse.net/article/Academic+rehabilitation+and+its+role+in+stimulating+learning+motivation+in+people+with+special+needs_7104/

Received: 18/07/2024, Published: 01/10/2024

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Academic rehabilitation and its role in stimulating learning motivation in people with special needs

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Abstract

Attention to individuals with special needs is a necessary requirement and a priority that reflects the progress of nations and societies. The neglect of this group is considered a form of cultural and civilisational regression and a threat to social welfare, contributing to the waste of material and human resources. In recent years, with the evolution of humanitarian thinking and the pursuit of equal opportunities, efforts to rehabilitate and care for people with special needs have

Academic rehabilitation and its role in stimulating learning motivation in people with special needs

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Abstract:

Attention to individuals with special needs is a necessary requirement and a priority that reflects the progress of nations and societies. The neglect of this group is considered a form of cultural and civilisational regression and a threat to social welfare, contributing to the waste of material and human resources. In recent years, with the evolution of humanitarian thinking and the pursuit of equal opportunities, efforts to rehabilitate and care for people with special needs have intensified, enabling them to live happily according to their abilities and potential.

The field of care and rehabilitation for this group has received considerable academic attention, both in terms of practical studies and technological advances. This is due to the growing social awareness that people with special needs have the right to live like other members of society and need specialised educational programmes and qualified teachers to develop their life, educational and vocational skills. Therefore, the current research aims to highlight the role of academic rehabilitation (special education) in stimulating the learning motivation of individuals with special needs.

Keywords: Academic rehabilitation, Academic inclusion, Motivation to learn, Individuals with special needs.

Foreword

The progress of any society is measured by its attention to people with special needs. This group has suffered greatly throughout history, experiencing everything from violence and torture to pity and compassion. They have been isolated in special centres away from society, but now there is a growing demand for their right to live, participate and interact with other members of the community, thus realising the principle of equal opportunities as a fundamental human right.

Academic rehabilitation is education specifically designed to meet the needs of students with special needs. It is an educational approach that takes into account individual differences and aims to help learners achieve the highest possible level of academic success. This education can take place in mainstream classrooms or in specialised educational settings.

Academic inclusion is one of the methods of academic rehabilitation that aims to integrate people with special needs into mainstream classrooms with their peers. The concept of academic inclusion has accompanied significant changes in educational philosophy, emphasising that schools are for all and exclude no one. It takes into account individual differences and guarantees the rights of children with special needs. In addition, academic inclusion stimulates the learning motivation of people with special needs, which is a crucial factor in achieving academic success.

Research question

Individuals with special needs are present in every society and are referred to by various terms such as 'exceptional individuals'. This group includes those who differ significantly from typical individuals in their cognitive, emotional, motor and sensory development. The concept of special needs includes gifted individuals as well as those who are mentally, hearing, visually or physically handicapped, and those with communication disorders, behavioural and emotional disorders, and learning difficulties. This group represents a significant percentage of any society (Asma Hilal, 2012).

Attention and care for people with special needs has become an unavoidable necessity and a legitimate demand, reflecting international awareness, especially with the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and Persons with Disabilities in 1975. These documents included important principles such as social inclusion, participation and equal opportunities.

It became natural to adapt efforts and studies to innovate new and modern methods for rehabilitation of persons with special needs (Abdul Hamid Kamal, 2003).

Rehabilitation is seen as an organised and continuous process aimed at bringing people with disabilities to the highest possible level in terms of health, social, psychological, educational and economic aspects. This process is a major social responsibility that requires planning, effort and social support at all levels. The philosophy of rehabilitation emphasises the transition of people with disabilities from the idea of dependence on others to the need for independence. This means moving from the perception that they are incapable to the belief that they can be self-reliant through personal and social competence.

Special education is based on important strategies, one of which is the commitment to provide educational structures for the care and education of different categories of people with special needs. These structures can be divided into two types: educational frameworks within the regular education system and those within the non-regular education system, such as day and night care centres. Within the regular education system, the concept of academic inclusion has emerged, which involves teaching exceptional children alongside their typical peers in regular classrooms, while providing the conditions and factors that facilitate the success of the educational process and enable these students to benefit as much as possible from the programmes offered in mainstream schools (Kawafha et al., 2007).

Academic inclusion aims to provide appropriate educational opportunities for learning, which means that inclusion programmes work to increase opportunities for classroom interaction between exceptional children and their typical peers. Classroom activities, represented by different teaching methods and assessment techniques, increase opportunities for real learning.

For students to learn, there must be school motivation. School motivation is defined as an internal state that stimulates the learner's behaviour and directs it towards the achievement of a specific goal. It increases the effort and energy expended to achieve these goals and is essential for learning to take place (Abu Awad, 2009).

Academic rehabilitation, or special education, is a type of rehabilitation that includes all the educational services that schools can provide for exceptional children. These services include educational, social and psychological aspects (Abdul Ghaffar & Al-Sheikh, 1985).

These services also include specialised educational materials and qualified teachers. Individuals with special needs require specialised educational programmes that help them develop their abilities to the fullest extent of their capabilities, while promoting their independence, enabling them to integrate into their communities by providing training and employment opportunities, protecting their rights, and ensuring the principles of equality and equal opportunities (Kawafha Taysir, 2010).

Consequently, individualised education has become one of the most distinctive features of the field of special education within the framework of providing specialised educational services and supportive services needed by individuals with special needs. These are non-educational support services that complement special education services, including medical, health, psychological, counselling and social services (Hallahan & Kaufman, 1991).

Thus, learning motivation is the result of the interaction between internal factors (the learner) and external factors represented by the educational environment, including the available resources, materials and qualified specialised teachers. On this basis, we ask the following question:

Does academic rehabilitation play a role in stimulating the learning motivation of people with special needs?

1. The concept of academic rehabilitation (special education)

Kauffman and Hallahan (2006) define academic rehabilitation as a type of education specifically designed to meet the exceptional needs of a child who has been identified as exceptional or has a specific single or dual exceptionalities (multiple disabilities). This may require the use of special materials, methods, specific teaching strategies, equipment and services (Ziad Kamel et al., no date).

According to Al-Dahmashi (2007), special education is teaching that is specifically designed to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. It takes into account individual differences and aims to help learners achieve the highest level of success and adaptation possible given their abilities. This teaching may take place in mainstream classrooms or in specialised educational settings.

Kawafha Taysir (2004) points out that academic rehabilitation includes all specialised educational programmes tailored to individuals with special needs. These programmes aim to help them realise their potential and develop their abilities to the fullest, thereby facilitating their adaptation to the society of which they are a part.

Therefore, academic rehabilitation includes a range of services and educational programmes that involve specific modifications in curricula, materials or teaching methods in response to the unique needs of students who cannot meet the demands of regular education programmes.

Special education emphasises the need to focus on individuals with special needs by adapting curricula and teaching methods to meet their needs. This allows them to be integrated with their peers in mainstream classrooms, while providing intensive scientific support to special education teachers. Such support helps them to implement effective teaching strategies for children with different disabilities as well as for gifted children.

2. Aims of Academic Rehabilitation (Asma Hilal, 2012)

2.1 Achieving personal competence

   - This involves helping people with special needs to achieve independence, self-sufficiency, self-direction and self-reliance. It involves developing their personal potential and their mental, physical, emotional and social readiness.

2.2 To achieve social competence:

   - This means enabling people with special needs to build social relationships with others, achieve social adjustment and acquire social skills that facilitate their integration into society. It also addresses their psychological needs, such as the need for security, belonging, self-confidence and self-realisation, while reducing feelings of inadequacy, incapacity and inferiority.

2.3 Achieving professional competence:

   - Vocational competence refers to empowering people with special needs with practical skills and relevant technical experience appropriate to their disabilities and abilities. This empowerment enables them to engage in a range of occupations in the future, leading to self-sustaining economic competence. Achieving this requires a balance between cognitive academic aspects and non-academic activities, as well as skills and vocational training, ensuring a holistic approach to the educational, psychological, social and vocational rehabilitation of people with special needs. This comprehensive rehabilitation ultimately leads them to careers that match their abilities.

Levels of academic rehabilitation

3.1 Preventive level

The preventive level includes organised and intentional procedures aimed primarily at reducing the occurrence of impairments or deficiencies that lead to dysfunction in physiological or behavioural functions. This can be achieved by the following methods

- Reducing the negative effects of disability: Implementing strategies to minimise the impact of disability on the individual.

- Use effective diagnostic tools: Using good diagnostic methods for early identification of disabilities.

One of the key prevention programmes emphasised in special education is early intervention, which involves taking protective measures for the mother or foetus to prevent potential disabilities. These interventions begin before marriage and focus on the detection, diagnosis and identification of the causes of disability, particularly genetic factors. In addition, necessary precautions during pregnancy include protecting the mother from certain diseases such as hypertension, exposure to radiation and the use of medication without medical consultation (Kawafha Taysir & Omar Abdul Aziz, 2003).

3.2 The therapeutic level

The therapeutic level is concerned with addressing deficits and reducing the incidence of disability through compensatory measures. This may involve the use of medication, surgical procedures or assistive devices to improve the functional abilities of the individual.

4. Key elements of the academic rehabilitation process

The academic rehabilitation process includes several key elements, the most important of which are:

- Specialised programmes:
- Quality Support Services:
- Specialised human resources: -
 Well-equipped facilities:
- Appropriate equipment and materials:

5. Institutions for special education

Special schools include two types of educational structures (Kawafha Taysir & Omar Abdul Aziz, 2003).

5.1 Educational structures within mainstream education systems

This type of structure supports the concept of academic inclusion and includes:
- Regular classroom instruction: Individuals with mild disabilities are educated in regular classrooms alongside their typical peers.
- Regular classroom with additional support services: Students with visual or hearing impairments receive appropriate environmental adaptations and support.
- Regular classroom with additional therapeutic education: Students with special needs attend regular classes with their peers, but leave for periods to receive specialised services from professionals in areas such as speech and language therapy or severe learning difficulties.
- Regular classroom with resource room services: Exceptional students move to resource rooms equipped with listening materials, models and specialised books for periods of time.
These educational structures are essential in fostering an inclusive environment where those with special needs can thrive alongside their peers.

5.2 Educational Structures within the Non-Regular Education System (Special Centres)

A. Full-time residential centres: These centres accommodate children with severe and profound disabilities, such as mental retardation and sensory and motor impairments. These children live in the centres full time, with occasional visits from their parents.

B. Special day centres: These centres accept exceptional children only during the day and provide them with health, educational and social services. Examples include educational centres for mentally retarded children, deaf and dumb children, and visually impaired children.

C. Special classrooms attached to hospitals: These classrooms serve children with chronic illnesses who cannot attend regular schools because of their conditions. They require continuous medical care in the hospital and a visiting teacher provides education for this group (e.g. children with heart and vascular diseases, chronic epilepsy, diabetes, kidney failure).

6. Academic inclusion

Kawafha et al. (2007) define academic inclusion as "teaching exceptional children alongside their typical peers in mainstream classrooms, while providing the conditions and factors that contribute to the success of the educational process, allowing these students to benefit as much as possible from the programmes offered in mainstream schools".

Ling et al (1981) view academic inclusion as a concept that involves helping children with disabilities to coexist with typically developing children in regular classrooms.

Hallahan and Kauffman (2003) offer another definition of inclusion, which involves placing exceptional children with typical children in regular classrooms, either temporarily or permanently, to provide better opportunities for academic and social interaction (Farouk Al-Rousan, 2013).

Academic Inclusion is also defined as a type of programme that places exceptional children in mainstream classrooms with typical peers for certain periods of time and in certain subjects, provided that the exceptional child benefits from the experience. It is essential to create appropriate conditions to ensure the success of this approach. This process is based on two basic conditions:

1. Homogeneity between typical and exceptional pupils: There must be a compatible environment between regular students and those with special needs.

2. Planning of educational programmes and teaching methods: Programmes and teaching methods must be designed for both typical and exceptional students.

Types of Academic Inclusion: (Qat'an Ahmad Al-Dhaher, 2008)

1. Full academic inclusion: This refers to the integration of children with special needs with their typical peers in regular classrooms, allowing them to benefit from the educational programmes designed for their peers, in addition to receiving specialised educational services.

2. Partial academic inclusion: This involves the integration of exceptional children with their typical peers in mainstream classrooms for one or more specific subjects.

7. Factors for the success of academic integration

Several factors must be provided for the successful implementation of academic inclusion (Farouk Al-Rousan, 2013):

1. Identification of beneficiary groups: It is essential to identify which groups of children can benefit from inclusion programmes and which cannot. Children with mild disabilities, such as mild intellectual disabilities or mild to moderate sensory impairments (hearing and vision), as well as those with mild emotional disturbances and learning difficulties, can benefit from inclusion programmes, whether in special classes

attached to regular schools or through full-time inclusion in regular classrooms. However, severe disabilities are better served in specialised centres.

2. Provision of necessary resources and facilities: All necessary resources and facilities must be available to ensure the success of the inclusion process, which may include resource rooms in mainstream schools.

3. Preparation of school management and parents: Both the school administration and the parents of both exceptional and typical students must be prepared to accept the concept of inclusion.

4. Determining the number of pupils to be included: The number of children to be included should not exceed three in a classroom, taking into account the number of typical pupils, the size of the class and the level of education.

5. Preliminary determination of the type of inclusion: It is important to determine in advance whether the inclusion will be full or partial.

6. Activating inclusion laws: Implementation of basic inclusion laws that ensure health, social and educational protection and care for people with special needs.

7. Establish objective evaluation criteria: Establishing objective criteria to evaluate the success of the academic inclusion process should be an ongoing part of the educational process, aimed at improving the quality of academic inclusion.

The Role of Academic Inclusion in Stimulating Learning Motivation for Individuals with Special Needs

Academic inclusion is considered one of the most important strategies in the development of special education programmes (academic rehabilitation) and a key approach to stimulating learning motivation in exceptional students. Learning motivation is defined as an internal state that drives learners to achieve their maximum potential in any educational situation in which they participate, with the aim of satisfying their cognitive needs and achieving self-actualisation (Al-Zyoud et al., 1993).

Learning motivation can also be understood as anything that drives the learner's behaviour towards a specific goal or purpose, with sources of motivation being either internal or external. In addition, motivation arises from students' perceptions of the desired goals of school and the value of the activities they engage in in relation to the subject matter and the educational environment in general (Tardif, 1992).

Motivation has been interpreted from different perspectives due to the different theoretical frameworks on which each theory is based. Bandura (1986) explained motivation as the continuous and reciprocal influence between social and personal factors. One of the key tenets of social cognitive theory is the ability to observe others and draw personal conclusions, leading to self-reflection. Through the process of academic inclusion, exceptional children learn from typical peers as they engage in various activities. Observing others is not a passive behaviour, but an active and effective action that can generate motivation to learn and encourage participation in similar school activities.

Modern strategies for stimulating learning motivation include the use of project-based learning, whether individual or group projects, which allow students to engage in activities they choose freely and with interest. According to self-determination theory, when students have the freedom to choose activities that suit them, they will pursue those activities with determination and commitment because they find them interesting and enjoyable. This in turn contributes to their personal development.

Researchers emphasise that education that includes the element of choice increases students' sense of self-efficacy and promotes independence and discipline (Aziza Al-Mani, 2005). In this context, the role of the teacher in developing students' intrinsic motivation is crucial. This includes accepting all students unconditionally and treating each student as a person worthy of respect and trust, especially when dealing with students with special needs.

Empathy is also essential; teachers must be able to put themselves in their students' shoes and understand them without ridicule or sarcasm. Rogers adds that the teacher is not only a transmitter of knowledge, but also a facilitator in the student's learning journey - acting as a mentor, advisor, listener and coach. In this role, teachers should inspire a love of learning, sustain that enthusiasm and address students' emotional needs.

Academic inclusion provides opportunities for teachers to understand individual differences among learners and to develop programmes and teaching methods that take these differences into account.

Self-determination theory states that motivation is driven by the fulfilment of basic psychological needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000), which include:

- **Independence**: The need for people with special needs to be able to rely on themselves rather than being dependent on others. This shift from the notion of disability to the notion of ability is crucial for successful rehabilitation.
- **Competence**: The belief that they are capable in their interactions.
- **Social relatedness**: The ability to form social relationships with peers and teachers.

The process of academic inclusion facilitates positive interactions between typical students and their exceptional peers. It also supports the adjustment of exceptional individuals, enhancing and developing their self-concept. Academic inclusion encourages exceptional students to cultivate a positive self-image and to see themselves as integral members of the mainstream school community rather than as marginalised individuals to be treated with pity or compassion.

It also helps people with special needs to live in society with dignity and respect, as people with rights and responsibilities, rather than as a marginalised group who deserve pity and charity.

Conclusion

The philosophy of rehabilitation of people with special needs focuses on valuing and investing in human resources. The rehabilitation process is a collective social responsibility that requires planning, action and social and economic support at all levels.

Academic rehabilitation is one of the most important forms of rehabilitation and aims to educate people with special needs according to their abilities and the severity of their physical and mental disabilities. It equips them with the necessary academic skills and helps them to achieve personal, social and professional competence.

Academic inclusion is a key strategy within academic rehabilitation, aimed at breaking the isolation of people with special needs and recognising them as valuable members of society.

The integration of people with special needs into a supportive classroom environment that addresses their psychological, social and educational needs is a successful approach, provided that the necessary material and human resources are available, as well as appropriate programmes adapted to their abilities. Effective academic inclusion leads to successful academic rehabilitation, which in turn stimulates the learning motivation of individuals with special needs.

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