CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

A specific learning disability is a neurological condition that affects a child's brain and impairs his ability to carry out one or many specific tasks. These tasks include reading comprehension, writing, speaking, listening, and calculating. A child with learning disability is neither slow nor mentally retarded. An affected child can have normal or above average intelligence. This is why a child with a learning disability is often wrongly labelled as being smart but lazy. Dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia are classifications under specific learning disability based on the nature and needs. Of these, dyslexia is the focus of this study. Dyslexia is a language based disability, related specifically to reading comprehension although reading comprehension affects writing to a great extent and hence it is difficult to clearly truncate one from the other. This research study is an attempt to analyse the classroom strategies used by teachers of class V to VII to support children with dyslexia (CWD) n a school of Delhi, for developing language, skills in English. Situating the study in an interpretive paradigm, a purely qualitative approach was followed to collect and analyse the data from the field. Out of a pool of five non- Govt. Schools in Delhi with identified CWD, one school which was open to such a study was chosen for field work. Data was collected by observing classroom transactions related to English language in grades 4 to7 in the school. Triangulation of data was carried out through interactions with the Head, teachers, special educator and students although the major sources of data were classroom observations and interactions with the English teachers. Care was taken to select English prose and grammar classes of all the teachers for observation. The data analysis brought an insightful picture of the philosophy and practice of education of CWD of the school vis-à-vis learning of English language skills. It is evident that this study results have implications for teacher education, both pre and in-service and also for the Heads of schools for organising refresher courses for teachers to be empowered with the specialised classroom strategies for addressing the needs of CWD.

KEYWORDS: Language Based Disability, Dyslexia, Language Skills in English, Interventions, Specific and General Classroom Strategies, Accommodation, Modification

1. INTRODUCTION

The following are some of the common observations or comments about students from teachers across schools:

"He has the ability, if he just tried harder, he could answer the questions. He chooses not to do the work." "If she would just pay attention, she would get it." "After I give the instructions, she sits there and stares at the paper. She is not motivated." "I ask her a question in the class, she stands up with a blank expression and attempts to answer sometimes after I explain the question over and over. But she takes too long to answer. This has happened in several occasions. Many times I lose my patience" These observations could be about a child with dyslexia, one among the

different types of learning disabilities. A child with dyslexia cannot try harder, pay closer attention, or improve motivation on their own; they need help to learn how to do those things. Any learning disability is not a problem with intelligence. Learning disabilities are caused by a difference in the brain that affects how information is received, processed, or communicated. Children and adults with learning disabilities have trouble processing sensory information because they see, hear, and understand things differently.

1.1 Learning Disability

A learning disability is a neurological condition that affects a child's brain and impairs his ability to carry out one or many specific tasks. These tasks include reading comprehension, writing, speaking, listening, and calculating. A child with learning disability is neither slow nor mentally retarded. An affected child can have normal or above average intelligence. This is why a child with a learning disability is often wrongly labelled as being smart but lazy.

A learning disability is also seen in terms of the difference between a child's learning capacity and his actual learning ability. This is because his brain finds it difficult to understand certain signals and prevents him from processing the information associated with those signals.

1.2 Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a disability related specifically to reading comprehension although reading comprehension affects writing to a great extent and hence it is difficult to clearly truncate one from the other The other disabilities encompassed by learning disabilities are dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia, related specifically to writing, math calculations and hand motor coordination.

Despite the fact that dyslexia is a known classroom disability, it has not reached its optimum awareness 1 n the schools in The developing countries Teachers either ignore the deficiency or blame it on the child's personality branding it as laziness, attitude or aggression The child continues to graduate from one class o the other totally inept at handling the pressure of the higher classes This leads to behavioural problems

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The framework includes some of the theories that inform the nature of children with dyslexia and the corresponding needs followed logically with the classroom intervention strategies that flow out from their nature and needs. For every child, reading has many connotations. It is the key to success in school, in the development of interests outside school, to the enjoyment of leisure time, and to personal and social adjustment. It helps the child in adjusting to others in the same age group, to become independent of parents and teachers, to select and prepare for an occupation and to achieve social responsibilities (Dechant & Smith 1977). 'Every man who knows how to read has it in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways in which he exists, to make his life full, significant and interesting' (Huxley 1994). In the modern school, effective reading is the most important avenue to effective learning. Difficulty with reading by far, is the most common characteristic of a student with learning disabilities. It is estimated that 90% of all children identified as learning disabled, are referred for special education services because of reading problems. (Kavale & Forness 2000)

Reading Process

Reading can be compared to the performance of a symphony orchestra. (Anderson, Hiebert et al, 1985) Reading is

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a holistic act. Even though reading is sometimes characterised by specific skills such as discriminating letters, identify words, and understanding specific vocabulary; performing the sub-skills one at a time, does not constitute reading. Reading can take place only as an integrated performance. Therefore, deficits in any of these sub-skills will affect the reading efficiency. (Mehta and Swarup, 2004) Children with dyslexia are known to have remarkable potential in many areas like creative thinking, art and craft, oration etc. A paradigm shift is the call of the hour- the profound change in perspective, from fixing deficits to reinforcing strengths which can contribute to and catalyse amazing success in the lives of many students who struggle in school. The multiple intelligence theory of Howard Gardner and the competency theory of Robert Brooks closely support this perspective.

2.1 Theories of Gardner and Brooks

Multiple Intelligence Theory - Howard Gardner (1983, 2006): Howard Gardner's research and writing laid the groundwork for many children with Language Based Learning Disability to understand and recognise that having a learning disability does not mean that the children labelled so are stupid. In Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983), Gardner critiqued the notion that there is just one dimension of human intelligence that can be measured by psychometric tests. In Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons (2006), Gardner has added on and updated his earlier work in tune with the contemporary developments in the field.

'Islands of Competence'- Robert Brooks (2005): Robert Brooks amplifies the importance of realizing the potentials of children beyond academics. His work centres on developing resilience in young people. He is most often recognized for his mandate that adults have the responsibility for helping children develop "islands of competence" — areas in which a child can excel and so develop a sense of being a capable, worthy and productive human being. The import of these theories, especially in the context of children with dyslexia (CWD), is that these children have to be recognised for the competence the have while dc-emphasising their learning disabilities.

2.2 Social, Academic and Emotional Problems Related to Dyslexia and Their Physical and Social Maturity: (Adapted from Michael, 2004)

Dyslexic children may be physically and socially immature in comparison to their peers. This can lead to a poor self-image and less peer acceptance. Dyslexics' social immaturity may make them awkward in social situations. Many dyslexics have difficulty reading social cues. They may be oblivious to the amount of personal distance necessary in social interactions or insensitive to other people's body language.

Language and Peer Relationship: Dyslexia often affects oral language the functioning. Affected persons may have trouble finding the right words stammer, or may pause before answering direct questions. This puts them at a disadvantage as they enter adolescence, when language becomes more central to their relationships with peers.

Memory: Just as dyslexics have difficulty remembering the sequence of letters or words, they may also have difficulty remembering the order of events.

Inconsistencies: The inconsistencies of dyslexia produce serious challenges in a child's life. There is a tremendous variability in the student's individual abilities. Although everyone has strengths and weaknesses, the dyslexic's are greatly exaggerated.

Variation in Performance: The performance of CWD varies from day to day. It makes it extremely difficult for the individual to learn to compensate, because he or she cannot predict the intensity of the symptoms on a given day.

Emotional Problems

Anxiety: Anxiety is the most frequent emotional symptom reported by dyslexic adults. Dyslexics become fearful because of their constant frustration and confusion in school.

Anger: Many of the emotional problems caused by dyslexia occur out of frustration with school or social situations. Social scientists have frequently observed that frustration produces anger. This can be clearly seen in many dyslexics.

Vulnerable Self Image: The dyslexic's self—image appears to be extremely vulnerable to frustration and anxiety.

Depression: Depression is also a frequent complication in dyslexia. Although most dyslexics are not depressed, children with this kind of learning disability are at higher risk for intense feelings of sorrow and pain. Perhaps because of their low self esteem, dyslexics are afraid to turn their anger toward their environment and instead turn it toward themselves. Family problems: Like any handicapping condition, dyslexia has a tremendous impact on the child's family, like sibling rivalry and frustration of parents being manifested in negative ways, affecting the self esteem of CWD.

2.3 Interventions, Modifications and Accommodations (Adapted from Newhall, 2012)

Classroom interventions of any kind are based on the nature and needs of CWD, as discussed in the above section. Accommodations are alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow children with learning disabilities to complete the san-iè as other students. Accommodations do not alter the content of assignments, give students an unfair advantage or in the case of assessments, change what a test measures. They do make it possible for students with learning disability to show what they know without being impeded by their disability. While the majority of a student's program should be as closely aligned with the general education curriculum as possible, some accommodations and modifications are more often than not, necessary. Decision on the matching interventions should be based on the individual needs of each child.

2.4 Accommodations

Presentation: Using of audio tape to facilitate replay of the content for better comprehension, providing large prints for better reading and comprehension, reducing the number of words per line and page for easy reading and comprehension, designating a reader to a CWD for comprehension by ensuring the consistency in diction and pronunciation of the reader, presenting instructions orally etc are accommodation strategies for presenting content to CWD.

Response: Allowing for verbal responses, allowing for answers to be dictated to a scribe, allowing the use of a tape recorder to capture responses, permitting responses to be given via computer, permitting answers to be recorded directly into test booklet etc are accommodations related to the responses of CWD.

Setting: Providing preferential seating, providing special lighting or acoustics, providing a space with minimal distractions, administering a test in small group setting, administering a test in private room or an alternative test site etc are accommodations regarding the settings for CWD.

Timing: Allowing frequent breaks during tests, extending the allotted time for test are related to time flexibility.

Test Scheduling: Administering a test in several timed or over several days, allowing subtests to be taken in a different order, administering a test at a specific time of day etc are related to test scheduling.

Other: Providing special tests, providing on-task/focusing prompts, reading out the questions and explaining the meaning and providing any reasonable accommodation that a student needs apart from the existing provisions are the additional accommodations that can help CWD.

3. DATA COLLECTED FROM THE SCHOOL

3.1 Brief Profile of the School

The school, which was started way back in 60-s by a single person is presently run by private management. At the time of recruitment, prospective teachers are briefed about what their job entails in terms of children with special needs (CWSN). They are oriented about the philosophy of inclusion and inclusive practice in the school, alerting them to the challenges they are likely to face. The novice teachers get constant help and support from the more experienced teachers through the process of mentoring. They are given opportunities to discuss the issues and challenges faced by them in the classes with the experienced teachers, especially the special educator. The ratio of learners with disability to those without in each class is 30:5 (approximately). Teachers' time table is so designed that every teacher gets at least two periods free each day for planning and library reference etc. Teachers are not thrust with undue burden.

3.2 Data Collected from Teachers

Long interviews with the concerned teachers of CWD (4 English teachers) revealed the following perceptions: The interview schedule included questions to find out their understanding about the nature and needs of CWD, their role to address these needs and the classroom strategies that they followed. (Source for the interview schedule preparation of Dyslexia Toolkit: National Centre for Learning Disabilities: http://ncld.convio.net)

Nature of CWD

The following were the perceptions of the teachers regarding the nature of CWD in general and the support they got from the school

Writing: CWD make errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, spacing, leaving clear margin and in handwriting. Their problems in copying matter interferes with generating ideas, their lack of knowledge about writing or their ability to press in written form, what they do know impacts on their ability to operate and deploy the cognitive process considered central to effective writing and often, the writing strategies employed are immature and ineffective.

Reading: CWD reads in a laboured way, lacks accuracy, flow, speed and clarity. They miss out words and ignore punctuations. Reading comprehension of CWD is very low compared to average child of the class.

Listening and Cognition: CWD do not follow instructions unless repeated atleast thrice. They understand lesson transaction only if explained atleast thrice. They cannot remember oral information unless given in a written form personally.

Oral Language: CWD cannot pronounce properly even simple words like class and board, cannot re use words, cannot narrate stories, cannot communicate mundane things clearly, can understand but cannot express simple things.

Written Language: CWD cannot copy written matter from blackboard or from a friend's note book without mistakes, can tell an answer but cannot write it in a given time as others, writing mirror images of alphabets is common issue as also their illegible handwriting and inability to write in a straight line.

Behaviour: CWD are not cooperative with peers, do not participate in activities, cannot mix with peers and remain aloof and indifferent, are not sensitive to others' needs, cannot adjust n a new situation, fail to carry out responsibilities.

Assessment: Periodic assessment is done for children with dyslexia once in every 3 months. Internal assessment by special educators is carried out followed with monitoring by class teacher. Instead of paper pencil test term wise and annually, continuous and comprehensive evaluation is carried out projecting the strengths of a child in all possible dimensions along with academic achievement. Few, general software is used for assessment of learners with learning disabilities. But nothing specific to Dyslexia was used.

General Conduct: CWD are shy, remain troubled, sad and anxious, are lazy and work slowly, always feel tired, remain absent often, are hyperactive and show destructive behavior sometimes.

Support from Special Educator: Regarding support from the special educator, all of the teachers said that whenever any need arose, while teaching or post teaching or in the planning stage, special educator was very much available for the required guidance which gave them immense confidence to move forward.

Time Table: Time table was worked out in such a way that each teacher gets 2 periods free in a day for planning for the next day, for library reference and also for giving personal attention to any needy student. Teachers do not feel that they are overburdened with teaching, but feel that they have breathing during the day. They said they are willing and motivated to help their learners both inside as well as outside the class.

Classroom Strategies: Most of the teachers said that they were trying their best to help CWD develop reading and writing skills and help them comprehend what they read.

Maintaining Record of Mistakes Frequently Committed by CWD: Most of the teachers did not maintain a record of matters related to CWD although they were convinced about the usefulness of such a record for discharging their role more effectively. Most of the teachers stated that meeting the needs of CWD posed a major challenge for them. They were convinced about the nature and needs of CWD and the role of teachers in addressing these. But, according to them, the large class size and the heavy work load with the constant pressure of completing the syllabus on time left them with no time for giving personal attention to CWD.

3.3 Discussion with the Special Educator of the Primary Section

The head-mistress of the primary section, who is a qualified special educator, shared many instances of how novice teachers were sensitized and inducted into the challenging world of CWSN. One instance is presented here: A young novice teacher with no initiation to teaching CWSN or qualification related to special education was very stressed and anxious about teaching a child with CWD in her class and had broken down crying admitting that she was not capable. With constant sharing, counselling and on-site and other academic support by the Headmistress, the novice teacher was appeased, sensitized and made confident to face the challenge. Slowly, the novice teacher began to enjoy her challenges.

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3.4 Observation of Classroom Processes and Feedback from CWD

The following section presents the observations of the classroom processes by the researcher and the corresponding feedback from CWD.

Table 1: Ten Classes Each, of all the 4 English Teachers of Grades 4 to 7 were Observed, Making a Total of 40 Observations. There were 3 to 4 CWD in Each of the 4 Grades

Classroom Strategies	No. of observations	Feedback from More Than 80% of Students. (Helpful? How often?)
Reading Related		
Using read along technique	08 (20%)	Rarely, not very helpful
Making students read silently	30 (75%)	Sometimes, not very helpful
Using tape recorder for developing listening skills, pronunciation & diction	04 (10%)	Rarely, very helpful
Technique of paired reading	24 (60%)	Sometimes, helpful
Correcting reading accuracy (punctuations, pausing and expression)	10 (25%)	Never
Asking for expressing the meaning of what is read (text matter) to check comprehension	12 (30%)	Rarely
Writing Related		
Monitoring the general writing of CWD	10 (20%)	Rarely
Monitoring the note taking skills of students	04 (10%)	Rarely
Checking the note booksof CWD and giving feedback for improving writing	04 (10%)	Rarely
Special strategy for improving spelling	02 (5%)	Rarely, very helpful
General Classroom Strategies		
Reviewing previous lesson at the beginning of the class	24 (60%)	Generally, helpful
Providing a capture of the whole lesson at the outset	08 (20%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Speaking at slow pace tomaximise comprehension	08 (20%)	Generally fast, very helpful
Using audio-visual material	10 (20%)	Rarely, very helpful
Asking questions from portion transacted to check comprehension	24 (60%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Using story boards for Visual processing of stories	08 (20%)	Rarely, very helpful
Presenting information visually and verbally	10 (25%)	Rarely, very helpful
Using blackboard adequately	16(20%)	Not adequate, very helpful
Legibility on BB	20 (50%)	Generally ok, very helpful
Providing a peer tutor or assigning CWD to a study group	08 (20%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Appreciating good answers and good behavior of CWD to enhance their participation	12 (30%)	Rarely, very motivating
Questioning		
Asking probing questions	12(30%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Encouraging CWD to answer giving time to think and answer	08(20%)	Sometimes
Allowing time for students to process requests and to ask questions	08(20%)	Rarely, teachers move to the next person fast
Facilitating General Comprehension		
Clear uttering of instructions and making CWD repeat these to ensure comprehension	10(20%)	
Repeating explanations, instructions and questions to ensure comprehension by CWD	12(30%)	
Breaking learning tasks into small steps	08(20%)	
Organising information for facilitation of learning by CWD		
Using colored chalks on BB	08(20%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Writing key words and underlining important concepts on BB	08(20%)	Sometimes, very Helpful
Making CWD mark the key words and important sentences in the text book and note book	10(25%)	Rarely, very helpful

Table 1: Contd.,

Accommodation		
Giving alternate activities/exercises instead of writing	08(20%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Shortening writing assignments and allowing extra time for writing	10 (25%)	Sometimes, very helpful
Allowing oral mode in place of written assignments	10 (25%)	Sometimes, very helpful
General Facilitation		
Providing a copy of class notes to students	08 (20%)	Rarely, very helpful
Assigning a peer as homework partner	12 (30%)	Rarely, very helpful
Developing a checklist of frequent mistakes by each CWD	08 (20%)	Rarely, very helpful
Giving special home task (specially tailored to suit the needs of CWD)	00	Never, very helpful

4. INTERPRETIVE DISCUSSIONS

Interpretive Discussion has been Presented on the Analysis of Data Collected from the Classroom Observations Presented above, Discussion with the Teachers and CWD of Elementary Classes

Students vary significantly in their ability to respond to the environmental stimuli in different modes. For example, students vary in their ability to give oral presentations; participate in discussions; write letters and numbers; write paragraphs; draw objects; spell; work in noisy or cluttered settings; and read, write, or speak at a fast pace. Moreover, students vary in their ability to process information presented in visual or auditory formats. The accommodations observed in the classes with respect to student performance addressed the needs arising from these differences among CWD only to a small extent.

4.1 Specific Strategies for Developing Reading and Writing Skills
Reading and Writing

Research findings reveal that read along technique by using taped texts simultaneously with the students' reading, facilitate the learning of printed materials for students who read slowly or with difficulty. Sharing of notes of fellow student, using taped lessons or providing a copy of the outline of the lesson by the teacher, help students with memory problems or difficulty in taking notes. A cassette recorder or a computer with word processing software used for written work or tests helps student whose writing is slow and illegible with reversed letters.

Many of the strategies significantly relevant for reading and writing of CWD are not used adequately by teachers: Read along technique, a comparatively easy strategy was observed only in 8 classes out of the 40 observed. To make a CWD read along while another child without CWD reads, is easily manageable which helps a CWD to develop sound recognition and visual recognition of words. Similarly, using a tape recorder for training in reading is not a difficult strategy given the fact that the school has a tape recorder and has the financial resources to buy more. Even in the classes where CWD were made to read, correcting their reading with punctuations, pauses and expressions were seen only in 25% of the observations. Teachers need to be sensitised and trained with better skills to carry out their role more effectively so as to develop the reading skills of CWD. The reading comprehension of CWD, ie: asking these students to explain what they understood from their reading is very crucial as mechanical reading without comprehension is not what the goal of language skills is! But, this was seen only in 30% of the classes observed.

As regards the teachers' role in improving the writing skills of CWD, it looks like a long way to go indeed! Monitoring writing by CWD, ie: checking their writing from black board, checking if they have written down

instructions/home tasks etc, were observed in very few classes. Still less frequently observed was giving feedback to CWD regarding improvement of handwriting.

Spelling

Special strategies for improving spelling are the needs that emerge from CWD.

Research literature advocates the use of a mis-speller's dictionary or computerized spell checker to help children who have difficulty with spelling with written material. A multi-sensory approach which combines saying, spelling aloud and writing words help teach spelling. Use of sand trays where words can be written helps learn spelling better as they can feel and see their own formations of letters in the sand, spread in the trays. A dictionary or thesaurus, suited to the child's learning level, is also an excellent tool for building vocabulary, spelling and reading comprehension.

None of these has been observed in any class nor has any teacher stated that she is aware of such techniques. These are strategies that do not need much of specialised training and can be picked up by teachers in a few days.

4.2 General Classroom Strategies

Coming to the more general classroom strategies, providing a capture of the whole lesson at the outset of the class which is very important for CWD as they understand whole to part of a lesson, was seen only in 20% of the classes. A much simpler and easier point to be borne in mind while teaching a class with CWD is maintaining a slow pace of speech to maximise comprehension by CWD. But this was observed only in 20% of the classes and that too of just one teacher. The other teachers seemed to be oblivious of the fact that CWD need more time to process sound stimuli and were more bothered on completing the syllabus on time. Another classroom strategy matching to the needs of CWD at elementary level is the use of story boards for visual processing of sequences of text.

This can be prepared on chart paper, separate card made and stuck on a larger sheet etc according to the creativity of the teacher. But this was seen only in 20% of the classes. Similarly, using audio-visual material or presenting the content visually both of which facilitate effective learning of any child was not seen in most of the classes. Surprisingly, the adequate use of blackboard and legibility on black board were seen only in 20% and 50% respectively although these are again simple and easy skills to be developed and used by any teacher.

Students with dyslexia make remarkable progress with targeted, intensive, skill based instructions. The conditions for learning that students with learning disabilities need are, fostering a sense of self efficacy by providing opportunities for success, using micro analysis of tasks and their presentation as step by step processes, repeating whatever is spoken, and maintaining an optimum speed. Based on this theoretical premise, step by step instruction with repetitions and extra time for comprehension are integral to the repertoire of teaching strategies of a sensitive teacher of CWD.

Most of the teachers point out that CWDs are unable to follow multiple instructions at one time and so breaking instructions into 3-4 sentences help in comprehension and retention. It was observed by the researcher in some of the classes that instructions were not clear and were not broken down to simpler steps to help CWD who were seen to be blank. A simple act of repeating explanations, questions and instructions etc by the teacher was observed only in a very few classes.

In fact, this can help most of the students for better comprehension and learning, not only CWD.

Teachers need to be sensitised and made aware of the basic nature and needs of CWD, to practice these simple tasks to facilitate learning of CWD.

Teachers need to assess in small intervals if the students are getting what the teacher is modeling/ teaching, ask questions and provide opportunities for them to repeat in their own words what is told to them. Repeat each statement, be it instruction or explanation or a feedback, for them to comprehend. This teacher behaviour was not observed in most of the classes. Peer tutors can be of great help to CWD. But assigning a peer tutor for helping a CWD or assigning a CWD to a study group was not seen in most of the classes (80%) although CWD have given the feedback that it is very helpful to them. CWD generally have low self confidence and they need immense morale boosting from their teachers in terms of appreciation and applause from teachers and peer group for their good answers and good behaviour. It was not observed in most of the classes. (70%)

Questioning skills are crucial for maximising the participation of students in a class and to make the class interactive and student centred. Asking probing questions to elicit answers was seen only in 12 classes (30%). In most cases where CWD were asked questions, teachers after asking a question, went on to the next child or gave the answers themselves without probing. Also, in most cases it was seen that teachers were not patient to give enough time for CWD to process their thought and answer even if they knew the answer. This was evident during the interaction with CWD after the class when they said that they knew the answer and wished that the teacher gave them more time. It was also observed that teachers don't encourage students in general and CWD specifically to ask questions for clarifications. CWD generally need more time for processing their thoughts and then to ask a question. Teachers didn't seem to give space and time for this.

4.3 Organising Information

Use of blackboard effectively helps CWD in many ways. Using coloured chalk for highlighting important points, underlying key words, organising the space on blackboard effectively to keep the keywords on board through out the class etc are all necessary for CWD. But these teacher behaviours were seen only in 8 classes.

Similarly, making CWD underline important words in their copy, dividing the space for highlighting keywords etc were also seen only in 10 classes.

4.4 Accommodations

As writing is generally labored and speed of writing is slow, verbal mode of presentation of assignment is the common need expressed by all CWD, supported by teachers and observations by the researcher. Research findings suggest that there should be a choice between oral response and written response, allowance for answers to be dictated to a scribe, option of the use of a tape recorder to capture responses, permitting responses to be given via computer, permitting answers to be recorded directly into test booklets etc.

According to CWD organization of the written assignment is a tough task. In this study, although exam related writing was not observed, CWD expressed their issues with general writing. They feel that there should be a choice between a written assignment/ test and oral presentation or it can be a mix of the two with higher weight for the latter.

But this accommodation was seen only in 8 classes. Shortening of writing assignments and allowing extra time for CWD in class work was not observed in most of the classes. CWD were treated without any differentiation in completing

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the written tasks. It is the need of the hour to equip teachers in facilitating CWD with the options of these alternative modes of responding. In fact, there is a need for a systemic change in attitude and provisions for CWD.

4.5 General Facilitation

Providing a copy of class notes to CWD to help them with their lack of speed in copying from the blackboard and help their parents to support them was also seen only in 8 classes. Other facilitations like assigning a peer as homework partner and monitoring the home tasks and study skills of CWD were seen in a very few classes.

Providing customised or a pesonalised home task to suit to the nature and needs of CWD was not seen in any class. Most of the teachers interacted with and whose classroom transactions were observed, seemed to be struggling with derisory or half-baked knowledge about the strategies and approaches required to address the needs of CWD. They seemed to lack the required sensitivity and empathy to indefatigably put forth the required efforts to facilitate reading and writing skills in English.

5. CONCLUSIONS

There is enough evidence emerging from this study to conclude that CWD are not enjoying the learning experiences, accommodations and modifications that they deserve vis-à-vis their nature and needs. Although, this study is situated in an interpretive paradigm, where understanding the context is the goal and not generalization, it can be safely said that we have a long bumpy path to cross before achieving our goal of providing equal opportunities to our CWD to ensure their equal participation and holistic development. The inferences drawn do point at the teacher education programmes, both pre and in-service strands which need to be have knit in components of theoretical aspects integrated with hands on experiences for using specialised classroom strategies for CWD. More important is the on-site support to teachers to address their day to day challenges in this context. The Heads of schools of private schools and the respective officers in case of state run schools have a great role to play in organising in service teacher education programmes to address these issues to a great extent. Crowded classes, to a great extent, are major hurdles to bring in improvements in classroom practices, which compound as a much more glaring issue in our state run schools. The systemic inertia does pose a major issue in this context. Unless the system opens eyes to these issues and brings in revolutionary administrative changes which would have financial and other implications, there is no hope for light ahead.

Needless to say, even when all the facilities are conducive with class size etc in place, no transformations will be plausible in the quality of classroom experience for CWD, unless teachers are committed to their role as a teacher and sensitive to the needs of CWD.

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