

The Role of Parents in Special Education in the Maldives: Teachers' Voice

Authors : Fathimath Warda, Mariyam Nihaadh

Abstract : Students with Special Education Needs (SEN) are increasing in the Maldives, like anywhere else in the world, due to the changes in lifestyle of the people and ease of being diagnosed with advancements in medical health. With the growth in the population of these students, the demand for professionals in various fields is unmet. Thus, with the introduction of the Inclusive Education Policy in 2013, all students are educated in the same classroom by the regular teacher. This poses problems as the teachers are not well trained and qualified to meet the varying needs of the students, given the limited time and the large number of students in the classroom. This is a major concern for all stakeholders in the education sector and research has been conducted by various local scholars in this area. However, studies on the role of parents of such students is an area that remains yet to be explored in the Maldives, which makes a study of this nature crucial. The main aim of this study is to determine the ways in which the education provided to Special Needs Students can be maximized for a better outcome. Therefore, the study intends to understand the involvement of parents in providing education to special needs students from the teachers' perspectives. The basis for this study is the Parent Development Theory developed by Mowder, which was initially known as Parent Role Development Theory. A qualitative research has thus been utilised for the purpose of the study as it requires to find the beliefs and attitudes of teachers, along with relevant justifications regarding the role of parents in educating students with special needs. Data was gathered using one-to-one interviews, as it is one of the most reliable ways of getting meaningful and in-depth data. The study employs a total of 8 participants who are teachers teaching in inclusive classes where students with special needs are included. Emphasis was paid to select teachers who have the experience of teaching students with different disorders commonly found in the Maldives, namely in the four areas, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder and speech impairment. Hence, purposive sampling will be used to select the participants. Data analysis has been done using thematic coding. The findings revealed that teachers highlighted that parents' involvement was a key factor in ensuring success of education in children with special needs. Thus, the study concludes that the role of parents as a necessary input for the proper development of children and in educating children with special needs, suggesting that extra measures have to be taken develop a positive relationship between teachers and parents in order to strengthen this aspect.

Keywords : involvement, parents' role, special education needs, teachers' voice

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