Educational Resilience and Disability: Peer and School

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Abstract

Life is a 'jigsaw puzzle' with challenges, setbacks, hardships at some places and happiness, smiles, peace at other places, fitted together in different form and different facets on the board of time. Some people scum to the problems and some successfully manage to get out of the difficult situations in life. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity. The position of the researches in the field of resilience in past few decades was mainly confined to the areas of clinical psychology, work with children and young adults. The previous researches focused on the 'bounce back' of the children from the adversity they faced mainly in relation to the abuse, maltreatment and trauma. Understanding the resilience model involving a risk factor and protective factor, this concept is being used to understand the negotiation of disability in a young student in the late phase of adolescence. Disability and impairment in any form is considered to the risk factor. This research study tries to investigate the lived experiences of an only disabled child in the school (private).

Keywords: *Educational resilience, Disability, Peer and School.*

Introduction

To commemorate International day of Person with Disability, Department of Empowerment of Person with Disabilities (DEPwD), Government of India, launched *"Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan"* (in Hindi) or Accessible India Campaign in the year 2015. This campaign aims to achieve universal accessibilities for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). This provided a new hope to PwDs to gain access, equal opportunity, being a part of life and society. As per the World Health Organization " Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, impairment is a problem in body function of structure; an activity limitation is difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations."(WHO). According to Mondol & Mete (2013) "disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives." Taking into the cultural and context of Indian society, the disability is not considered as a natural problem but 'disability is a curse to the person and the family'. In order to break the myth and empower the disable person, India came up with (some modification) -"**The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill - 2016**". The act defined Disability as " Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept."(GOI, 2016). There are various criteria and legal support with which Person with Disability (PwD) can demand for better sanctions and development of the future. But beside all the legal benefit given to the PwD, they are not treated equally in the society. I take here the issue of the educational system and the differentiation in that arena. The Government of India provide with the concept of establishment of Inclusive education, with the thought that this will help in the proper development of the child and psychologically boost up the morale.

"Inclusion is a philosophy … bringing children with special needs well within the purview of mainstream education … recognizes the diverse needs of the students and ensures quality education to all through appropriate curricula, teaching strategies, support services and partnerships with the community." (District Primary Education Programme, 2000, p. 5)

It has been seen that in the urban as well as in rural areas the information and awareness regarding the awareness of disability issues and little resources (financial , etc.,)and discrimination of the children on the ground of disability make their survival vulnerable. Mostly in society they suffer the humiliations in school since they are not been accepted by the peers. Yet there are episodes of bullying, verbal abuse , negations, non involvement among peers hamper the morale students. Some students scum to the their existing circumstances where as some students do not. Also there are many students who achieved success in their life and they started negotiating their life at the school. Here, I

would like introduce, that, those who individuals are successful despite adversity are called resilient. Now arises a question : What is resilience? And how it works in educational context?

Concept of Resilience

Resilience is broad concept. Use of resilience is basically in the field of Psychology and Material sciences. Here, in this research I would like to elaborate on 'resilience' which is from the area of Psychology as how it is defined and researched on. If we explore the historical background of the resilience research, there are basically three clear strands which are visible as how this is been conceptualized. The first strand is drawn from studies on individual differences in recovering from trauma (Werner and Smith (1977). The second strand is derived from the experiences of individuals from high risk groups who obtain better outcomes than were expected from them (Rutter,1979), and the third strand flows from the ability of individuals to adapt despite stressful experiences that they faced (Garmezy, Masten & Tellegan, 1984). So, resilience researchers such as Rutter (1999) defines resilience as "relative resistance to psychosocial risk experiences"(p. 119). Whereas other pioneer such as Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker (2000) in the field defined 'resilience' as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity". Richardson (2002) described resilience as "the process of coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors" (p. 308). A key requirement of resilience is the presence of both risks and promotive factors that either help bring about a positive outcome or reduce or avoid a negative outcome.

According to Garmezy (1991) and Rutter (1979), resilience research originally was related most often to mental health outcomes rather than to educational outcomes. Therefore in the previous researches the focus of resilience research was on individual rather than environment. Here by environment I mean a family, school, institution community. The resilience researchers were more focused on the individual rather than on the effect of the surroundings. When it was investigated, it was found that environment accounts for a really great deal in positive coping when the individual are exposed to trauma, adverse conditions or war like situations. Therefore a more ecological know how is

required of resilience as the person – environment inter-reactions. According to the Bronfenbrenner(1979) the interaction between different part of the mesosystem predicts a good positive outcome. For resilience to occur in an individual requires two important components. First is the Risk factor(which includes trauma, adversity in form of loss of parents, disability, war etc.) and protective factor(those factors which help the child to get out of the risk factor. (parental care, siblings, teachers, friends etc.). In this research I had mainly focused my sole attention on the educational resilience.

Educational Resilience

In order to bring greater understanding to the terminology commonly used in literature and specify the particular domains of resilience, researchers have been increasingly using terms such as, "educational resilience" (Wang et al., 1994). Wang et al. (1994, p. 46) define educational resilience as the —"highlighted likelihood of success in school and in other life accomplishments, despite environmental adversities, brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences".

A very limited amount of research has been done in relation to the educational resilience in disable person in India. As such I found that there is dearth of specific research in Indian context where lived experience of the person suffering with disability is being explored in relation to educational context. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of the disabled student in order to identify what makes him 'bounce back' and do very well in academics despite adversity. Therefore I tried to 'dug upon' the untouched area of disability research which can also add to the resilience scholarship area. Till date the educational resilience was studied in the young children and young adults suffering single or multiple adversity in the non Indian context. This study tries to fill the gap in the area of resilience research, specifically educational resilience in Indian context.

The research question which directs this research are as follows:

- How child with disability negotiate the life in the school?

- What are problem that he face had been empowering to him?

- How the peer and school contribute in his studies in the school?

These research questions form the foundation of the research since it provides instances of 'inclusive education' in a private school and the educational resilience of the student who despite disability is trying best for his educational success.

For the purpose of the present research I take on the definition of educational resilience as higher possibility of school success with good grades in class X, in the presence of the multiple risk factors in which disability is the important one. Also, students demonstrate educational resilience due to their personal characteristics to deal with the adverse situation and 'come back' and attend the school on regular basis. In the educational resilience research, protective factor is also part of its umbrella term' Resilience'. So, in educational resilience also the presence of risk factor and protective factor is essential, as these two are the essential the concept of resilience.

Methodology

The present research involves the case study method to grapple the negotiation of the Prakash (pseudo name), who managed to survive a school life and accommodate with his surroundings. In would like to submit that the case study method had been most appropriate in this study since the case under the study finds difficulty in writing. The research intends to research the educational resilience, therefore in the academic sense the presence of risk factor(s) and protective factor(s) are essential for this concept. This descriptive in-depth research provides a very different kind of analysis of risk and resilience in relation to the educational, which can be seen as an effort to fillup the gap in existing literature and provide insight that "How" the private school settings 'respond' to the issues of disability where the resources are negligent to cater the survival of disable student according to the 'some standard' norm of the government in relation to the disable person. This study holds a special platform for its uniqueness as the child in the study faced multiple risk factors which 'pulls' him on the verge of dropout from the school. Before the start of the study, I was able to identify different risk factors which make the survival chances a real tough job. The risk factors are:

- Physical Disability
- Economically Weaker Section
- Resident of Slum in the early year of development (from birth till 2001)

Therefore method of data collection were intensive interviews with the peer, class teacher, and student in the class of class XI, non participant observation in classroom. Site of the study was a private school with the population of students coming from mostly low income families. This private school is near the slum catering the enrolment of 95% of the slum children. The children coming to this school are second to third generation learner who believes in the school and its philosophy. The school has two separate buildings where the old building caters the boys section and the new building caters the girls section. The main office, science labs and computer section is this side of the school. The period of observation was four months (both in and out of the class).

Discussion and Analysis

Introduction of the Child: Prakash

He is a young adolescent studying in class XI (Commerce). He suffered with severe muscular disability in his lower part of the body and hands by birth. He is unable to speak properly and takes time to reply back. From very young age he didn't had stability in his hands and lower part of the body. He uses walking frame for the support while walking. He is even unable to do basic chores properly e.g. Carrying bags on shoulder, hold pen in hand. He wants to complete his schooling till class XII. He opted for commerce as he finds himself unfit to stand and work in the science lab. He recently suffered with an accident where he fell from a height and broke his skull bone but after getting discharged he made his way to the school.

Interviews with Peer

All his classmates are studying with him since nursery. They are very particular with his basic needs between the class, e.g. going to computer classes, going to washroom, taking him from the two wheeler. His close friends Ram and Shyam(pseudo names) are very supportive. They told he was unable to go to toilet and wash himself even, so they from, class I are doing these things in the school for him. If Ram is absent, then Shyam takes on the activity of the Prakash and vice-versa by Ram if Shyam is absent. Together they all have lunch and enjoy in the class. Ram said *" Hum sab jagah leke jatei hain...wo hamara dost hai... hame koi faraq nahi padta ki wo eesa hai...hai to hai... par hum sab uske sath hain"*(I take him everywhere...he is our friend...I don't mind he is like that...he is like this...but we all are with him.) Shyam replied that once Prakash's parents (when in primary school) tried to shift the school to the nearby are of their residence but the students bullied him

very badly, so he left and came back to this school.

Interview of Teacher

The teacher recollected her experiences in relation to Prakash. As he was only PwD in the school. His condition was very poor in terms of sitting in the class. Teacher told " *kabhi kabhi hum khud hi uska kam kar dete the...jese toilet le ja ke saf kr dena...khana khilana...*"(sometime i used to do his work like taking and cleaning his toilet...making him eat).Teacher told that Prakash had undergone three surgeries and after thet he is able to walk with the help of walker and hold the pencil properly. Teacher say that " *uska dimag theek hai bas hath or peer mein pareshani hai*". Teacher told that how much difficult to teach him writing. She also added that his family was very poor and could not afford the fees of the child, so he got fee waiver for few years. She also told that " *uski ma ne Prakash ko dusre school me admission dilwa diya...par wahan bacchon ne bahut pareshan kiya...so wo wapas aa gaya*(Her mother got him admission in the nearby school...but the students bullied him badly...so he was again re-admitted in the school). Teacher also informed that school had no such facilities for disable students but they had tried to make relaxation wherever it s possible. (relaxation in regular attendance, entry in school till 8:30 am...so on)

Discussion

I would like to submit that in different ways but repeatedly the school landscape was empathetically woven as a complex tapestry of subtle and explicitly helpful to the child that it had become difficult to identify that which person was behind the love and care which was given to Prakash. The role of teacher was much motivating, as apart from her regular duties as a teacher to teach students, paid attention Prakash and his problems in the classroom (at the lower classes). She gave mother like protection to the disabled child. Teachers are concerned in an important way with the total development of human beings – physical, intellectual, social,

moral and spiritual (NCTE, 2009). This goes in corroboration of Benard (1997) proposes the concept of "—turnaround teachers". Turnaround teachers not only model the resilient behaviours which they desire from the students but also model three protective factors that buffer risk and enable positive development by meeting students' basic needs for safety, love and belonging, respect, power, and accomplishment and learning (Benard, 1991). The three factors include caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities to participate and contribute. School environments and specific teachers that are supportive and provide a positive place for the students to learn are immensely important to academic success was some of the   friend. Friendship is also necessary for proper development. The case and the response from the student was different. School environments and specific teachers that are supportive and provide a positive place for the students to learn are immensely important to academic success. Thus, the 'meso-system' of the Bronfenbrenner (1979) lies the zone of help from peer and school, which clearly shows the importance of the Peer and School's implication in the educational resilience of the disabled child.

Conclusion

Educational resilience in the case into consideration was basically hidden in the role of the peers and school as a very important protective factor which ensure the continuation of the school despite there were many chances were there to get dropout. This had clearly shown that the students in the school are highly influenced by the motto of "Love All...Serve All" The school (the site of study) believes in the philosophy that human values are important for the proper development of the human being. The core human values which are the basis of the school philosophy are: *sathya, dharma, shanti, prem* and *seva*. Therefore the motto " Love All...Serve All" holds great significance in the school staff and all the students studying in the school.

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