

Creativity amongst Children with Special Needs (CWSN): Tapping from School Teachers' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The present paper focuses on exploring school teachers' perceptions (N=20) about creative potentialities of CWSN by tapping on their experiences. The paper attempts to deconstruct the concept of creativity so that it can be understood in the context of children with special needs. By quoting experiences of teachers, the paper tries to understand and explore creative manifestations amongst CWSN as perceived by them. The findings indicated that the teachers who have direct interactions with CWSN possess positive inclination towards their creative potentialities as compared to others who do not engage with CWSN on a regular basis. The need of various pre-service and in-service programme which help teachers to equip themselves for nurturing the CWSN in their class was also voiced by the teachers during the discussions. The paper concludes by drawing out implications for school education as well as teacher education specifically focusing on the need for developing an inclusive pedagogy that focuses on needs of children arising by virtue of both their abilities as well as impairments.

Keywords: CWSN, Pedagogical strategies, Diverse abilities, Creativity, Twice-exceptional children.

Introduction

Every child is unique, they think differently, have different learning styles; hence they have diverse needs that have to be addressed. In the present dynamic world, education is expected to play a significant role in development and nurturance of hidden abilities and potentialities of all children including Children with Special

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Needs (NPE 2016). Parents and teachers have significant role in providing varied experiences and opportunities which should help children to realise their hidden potentialities and express them accordingly. Creativity is one of the abilities which is an important human attribute that equips individuals to function better in a rapidly changing contemporary environment (Craft, 2002). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) refers to it as one of the basic aims of education by stating '*Education must provide the means and opportunities to enhance the child's creative expression....*'. This paper focuses specifically on children with special needs because in the case of CWSN it becomes more challenging as their abilities most of the time gets overshadowed by their impairments (Neihart, 2008). In the education of children, teachers play an important role as they spend more time (after parents) with children (NCFTE, 2009). So, it becomes important to find out how teachers perceive or look at the abilities and potentialities of CWSN which becomes a basis for understanding and planning educational experiences for them. Hence, the present study envisioned to explore school teachers' experiences specifically in relation to CWSN and their perception of creative potentialities amongst them.

Understanding Children with Special Needs

With the enactment of RTE Act, 2009, today the classrooms seem to be even more diverse which in turn signifies the importance of inclusive education. Within the philosophy of inclusion each learner, irrespective of their abilities, socio-economic backgrounds or social conditions/context, has equal rights to participate, have access to resources and opportunities in the society. As one contemplates about the historical evolution in the field of special education, it highlights various milestones like different models of disabilities, change in terminologies, modifications in the educational provisions made for children to impart need-based education. For example, the term "disabled" or "handicapped" were replaced in the middle of 1970s by "people with disabilities" by considering disability as a characteristic of an individual, as compared to the defining variable. After that the phrase "Children With Special Needs" was introduced that had a broader perspective which expected to include all children along with person with disabilities who require special provisioning in educational setting and felt excluded in classrooms by virtue of their socio-economic

background, language of classroom, family conflicts, i.e., children who make bulk of dropouts from school system (NCERT, 2006). All these changes in terminologies reflect the way various prejudices and stereotypes in the society have been influencing the notion of disability in the past.

Theoretically, the conception of disability has changed from mere charity model to empowerment and from the medical model to the psycho-social models (The Disability Manual, 2005). Different models of disability that have evolved with time show paradigm shifts in the understanding of disability (theoretically) and provide basis upon which society and concerned authorities could make provisions for meeting their needs. These models provide multiple frameworks to understand issues and debates around disability, and also throw light on the perspectives held by people who create and follow particular models. Initially, there was a complete isolation and marginalisation of people with disabilities and people used to have an attitude of pity and charity towards them. This was followed by a period where more emphasis was given on their impairment than on their other abilities. The existence of barriers in environment and social reasons for non-functioning of these individuals was not considered. With the advent of the social model, disability was seen as a social construct and impairment was located within the individual that had implications for the society and its institutions to reflect on their structures and processes with a view to make them enabling for all individuals. The human rights perspective too emphasised that every human being irrespective of their impairments has certain rights and differences and it should be seen as diversity within the human race. This implied that various institutions of the society had the responsibility to prepare themselves for the existing diversity so that each individual is able to claim his/her rights, of which education was considered as the most important. Various models and perspectives of disability have shown the ways in which social attitudes towards person with disabilities have changed with time and contexts (Hegarty, 2001). Later perspectives of disability have definitely advocated for their empowerment, provisioning for human rights, equality, social justice and inclusion (Disability Manual, 2005).

After going through the gradual evolution in the field of special education, it can be said that the journey has been full of debates, contentions and issues that gets reflected in the wide gap between the theory and praxis. Moreover, till now the main emphasis as

far as education of Children with Special Needs is concerned, is on providing them support so that they are able to function by getting need based educational service where the 'service provider' mainly focuses on needs that arise due to their disabilities (Neihart, 2008). On the other hand, needs that arise from their abilities and potentialities seldom get recognition or attention. In tandem with this, in literature too, we find a similar scenario as Lederberg et al. (2012) have highlighted that very few researches supported creativity among CWSN.

Deconstructing the Idea of Creativity

Creativity is fundamental to life. The present world we live in has been shaped by human creativity. Creativity is possibly one of the most essential yet least understood constructs. Creativity can be referred to from different perspectives and conceptual frameworks that have different implications. For example, Boden (2004) states it in two ways; historical creativity and psychological creativity. In historical creativity, novelty is relative to an entire society whereas in psychological creativity novelty is relative to an individual. Hence, according to this conception, historical creativity seems to be rare while psychological creativity is widespread, and it involves all individuals under its umbrella. The conception of creativity is constantly evolving and transforming over the course of time. If we trace the etymology of the term it brings us to Greek, Judaic, Christian and Muslim traditions of thought where notion of 'inspiration' or 'getting an idea' was founded and creativity was considered to be a divine prerogative. Major shift in the conception of creativity was noticed during the Romantic era in Europe when human abilities started getting recognised as the source of 'inspiration' (Craft, 2002). But still creativity was seen only in the form of product.

The construct of creativity as process or cognitive skill came in the latter half of nineteenth century with the rise of experimental psychology. This led to the development in the mid-twentieth century of tests to assess the types of thinking claimed to produce or reveal creativity. The interest in creativity as 'process' led to a wider consideration of creative processes in the mid-twentieth century, under the influence of systems theory. The systems theory focuses on the complex events that occur during creative manifestations. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2015), creativity is not just a mental process, but also a cultural and social event. The

modern construct of creativity generally emphasised two aspects—originality and appropriateness. This approach saw creativity as a response to a pre-existing problem, rather than re-imagining or creation of new ideas. In the late modern period, terms ‘big C’ and ‘small c’ emerged that broadened it to include everyone as potentially creative. According to Gardner (1993), “*big ‘C’ creativity entails the integration and reorganisation of cognitive structures while small ‘c’ entails the extension of existing cognitive structures*”. With the further progression in the field, creativity began to be seen as a problem-solving tool, which includes the development of new commercial products and services, so the construct of creativity as innovation became extremely important (Charliele and Jordan, 2012). This idea of innovation led creativity from personal to social sphere; hence creativity as ‘social’ construct emerged. This construct viewed creativity as a collaborative social phenomenon developed in and through communities and groups, rather than residing within the individual. It was supported by Vygotsky’s view (1978) that individual thinking arises from, and is determined by close social interaction. This construct emphasised the importance of social recognition and acknowledgement by the community in determining what is accepted as creative. Thus, different constructs of creativity were influenced by the values and perceptions of the context. Therefore, we may conclude that the contemporary understanding of creativity is complex as it has resulted from the accumulation of earlier constructs as well as recent developments in psychological research. Hence, creativity has many connotations, is multifarious and is a culturally positioned process (Misra and Srivastava, 2006).

Creativity in education specifically in context of school children is looked upon as a human attribute that helps to adapt and respond to the rapidly changing world which implies its application to the everyday life contexts (Craft, 2005). Thus, according to Craft, it is found not only in complex academic settings but also in everyday life. This has widened the conception of creativity from a rare to an everyday phenomenon. In this context, Anna Craft argues that all children are capable of or have potential to possess little ‘c’ creativity. The discourse emphasises that small ‘c’/everyday ‘c’/little ‘c’ creativity perceives every child to be potentially creative. Narrowing down to the context of formal education to school or in fact to classrooms, the nurturance of creativity must be thought for every child irrespective of his/her disabilities, socio-economic backgrounds, or any other social context.

Rationale

Education plays an important role in every individual's life. And when we talk of children with special needs, role of education to empower and to give proper support according to their specific needs become even more crucial. The contemporary discourses of creativity imply that every child irrespective of his/her strengths, weakness, socio-economic background, disability can be potentially creative which should be nurtured through educational experiences. Children with special needs are often stigmatised and hence encounter many attitudinal and physical barriers (Dixon, 2005). In case of children with special needs Neihart (2008) talked of 'masking effect'. That is the needs arising due to disabilities of CWSN overshadow their abilities, which in turn leave their brighter side unnoticed. Thus, it is important that the teachers understand the specific needs of children in the classroom so that they can provide learning environment which helps the child to develop in a holistic manner and that the needs arising from abilities and disabilities should be met with same enthusiasm. Fortner (1986) on the basis of her study on intermediate-grade students with learning disability proclaimed that after creative productive-thinking training, the students with learning disability group significantly improved in a spontaneous writing task. Hence, if appropriate experiences are planned and provided to children with special needs, their creative potentialities can be unmasked and nurtured. Helen Keller was both deaf and blind. But with an appropriate support from her mentor, she was able to realise her potentialities. Thus, her case reinforces the importance of teachers in a child's life and a teacher's actions as well as initiatives depends on her conviction which in turn is largely influenced by her perception about children. Hence, the study envisages exploring teachers' perception about children with special needs and their creative potentialities.

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To study the teachers' perception about role of educational background in their preparedness to engage with CWSN.
- To study the teachers' perception about the role of higher authorities and fellow teachers in engaging them to teach CWSN.
- To study teachers' perception about inclusion of CWSN.

- To explore the teachers' perception about creative potentialities amongst CWSN.

Method

A total of 20 teachers, working in different schools of Delhi were selected to participate in the study as the study required a continuous engagement with the same group of teachers for a period of time that included three rounds of focus group discussion. For the present study purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used. Purposive sampling helped the researcher to make the sample better representative of population keeping in minds the objectives of study by including teachers from different types of schools in Delhi. Table 1 shows the distribution of teachers from different schools of Delhi. The methodology of the research study was mainly qualitative and descriptive in nature as it involved descriptions of teachers' experiences and anecdotes related to CWSN in the class.

Table 1
Sample Distribution

Type of School	Number of Teachers
MCD School of Delhi	5
Private School	4
Inclusive School	4
Special School	4
Sarvodaya School (Government)	3

The data were collected using five-point Likert scale (developed by Evangeline Kern (2006), adopted and modified by researcher for data collection according to the needs of present study) followed by focus group discussion with the participant teachers. By using the five-point Likert type questionnaire, the researchers tried to know the teachers' attitude and opinion related to children with special needs and their creative potentialities as well as their preparedness to plan learning experiences for CWSN both in terms of their educational background and the in-service learning opportunities that they got. This was followed by focus group discussions that further probed teachers to share their detailed experiences specifically with reference to CWSN. It helped researcher to develop deeper understanding about the various themes that emerged from the analysis of responses to the Likert scale. On the basis of responses obtained from Likert scale and in the light of various research studies some points of discussion were prepared. All the

teachers were involved in three rounds of focus group discussion. First round of FGD involved orienting the teachers about the issues of inclusion and their interaction with CWSN. Second round involved deeper engagement of teachers with issues related to inclusion and creativity amongst CWSN. Third round was mainly about consolidating the ideas.

Analysis

The responses of teachers that were gathered using the Likert scale were organised by adding the responses in respective categories followed by calculating the mean for each item. The various items in the Likert scale as well as the teachers' responses during FGD were then categorised into four themes. The qualitative responses of teachers gathered during FGD have been quoted along with the interpretation of each table under each theme.

Theme 1: Educational Background of Teachers

The item related to this theme were: 1, 3, 19, 21, 25. These items are summarised below in tabular form.

Table 2
Theme 1

S.No.	Items		SD	D	N	A	SA	M
1	My educational background has prepared me to effectively teach children with special needs.	f	0	8	4	7	1	3.05
		%	0	40	20	35	5	
3	I need more training in order to appropriately teach CWSN.	f	0	0	0	12	8	4.4
		%	0	0	0	60	40	
19	My educational background has prepared me to teach students with special needs.	f	0	9	3	7	1	3
		%	0	45	15	35	5	
21	My educational background acquaints me well to identify creative potentialities in CWSN.	f	0	3	11	6	0	3.15
		%	9	15	55	30	0	
25	I am provided with sufficient in-service training through my school/state which allows me the ability to identify and nurture creative potentialities in children with special needs.	f	0	12	7	1	0	2.45
		%	0	60	35	5	0	
SA–Strongly Agree, A–Agree, N–Neutral, D–Disagree, SD–Strongly Disagree, M–Mean, f = frequency								

Analysis of responses to Likert scale indicated that most of the teachers (45%) think that their educational background does not prepare them to teach children with special needs. Forty per cent of teachers strongly agreed to the fact that they require more training in order to teach CWSN. Needs of in-service programme were also voiced out by the teachers to identify and the teacher from government school “....*blind ladki bahut accha gaati hai, is tarah ki creativity to hum easily identify kar lete hain, but hamare pass koi tools to hote ni aur na hi humne B.Ed. me kuch aisa pada....*”. The responses show that the teacher education programmes need to have curricular spaces that addresses the issue of diversity amongst learners specifically with respect to CWSN and empower teachers to understand their learners without depending merely on the external tools. Instead the teacher education courses should help them understand the role of resources in their environment and collaborative models of teaching that involves the role of special educators, counselors, other school personnel as well as parents.

One of the teachers from regular school also mentioned that they get filtered information from the higher authorities regarding various beneficial schemes for CWSN provided by the government and other organisations, and when they encountered a child with creative potentialities in their classrooms they usually don't feel enough aware about tools, study materials, pedagogical modifications which may better equip them to nurture creativity that they could observe amongst their CWSN.

Theme 2: Role of Higher Authorities and Fellow Teachers

The items related to this theme were – 4, 5, 6, 11, 14, 15, 18.

Table 3
Theme 2

S.No.	Items		SD	D	N	A	SA	M
4	I am encouraged by my administrators to attend conferences/workshops on teaching students with special needs.	f	0	11	5	4	0	2.65
		%	0	55	25	20	0	
5	My colleagues are willing to help me with issues which may arise when I dealing with CWSN in my classroom.	f	0	1	9	9	1	3.5
		%	0	5	45	45	5	

6	I feel comfortable in working collaboratively with special education teachers when students with an IEP are in my classroom.	<i>f</i>	0	0	10	8	2	3.6
		%	0	0	50	40	10	
11	Collaborative teaching of children with special needs can be effective particularly when students with an IEP are placed in a regular classroom.	<i>f</i>	0	0	8	10	2	3.7
		%	0	0	40	50	10	
14	I can approach my administrators with concerns I hold regarding teaching CWSN.	<i>f</i>	0	4	12	2	2	3.6
		%	0	20	60	10	10	
15	I feel supported by my administrators when faced with challenges presented by CWSN in my classroom.	<i>f</i>	0	6	11	2	1	2.9
		%	0	30	55	10	5	
18	My school provides me with sufficient training opportunities in order for me to appropriately teach students with special needs.	<i>f</i>	1	9	7	3	0	2.6
		%	5	45	35	15	0	
SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, M-Mean								

As evident from Table 3, majority of the teachers reported that (M4 = 2.65) higher authorities did not motivate them to participate in in-service programme for CWSN. Very few teachers (15%) agreed that their school provided them with sufficient training opportunities to teach CWSN. The reason being that these teachers belonged to inclusive schools. From this it can be inferred that teachers who are working in inclusive setups have different experiences, and hence have different opinion. Quoting one of the teachers from inclusive school “*in collaboration with special educator, I modify my LPs according to his needs. During narration of a story he is in the class with other kids, but for writing work he goes to learning centre. Oral work is done with him in the class mostly*” (here the teacher is referring about a child who has cerebral palsy and learning disability). The teacher’s response shows that in inclusive schools, teachers get an experience of working in collaboration with special educators. Also, they engage in planning for the child as per the child’s needs, such as sending him to the learning centre for writing work. Thus, they develop an understanding that the responsibility of child’s learning lies on them as a regular teacher, but it is a

process that involves collaboration with special educators, other school personnel and the parents. Hence, the idea of being trained to teach the CWSN, as also discussed in the above theme, would trivialise the issue. Instead the teachers have to be oriented and engaged with the idea of inclusion and inclusive pedagogy through teacher education programmes. Also, in most of the items, under this theme, teachers took neutral stand, which shows that they were not openly putting forward their views regarding the roles of concerned authorities in preparing them for nurturing specifically CWSN and the creative potentialities in them.

Theme 3: About Inclusive Practices

The item related to this theme were – 7, 8, 9, 10.

Table 4
Theme 3

S.No.	Items		SD	D	N	A	SA	M
7	Students who are diagnosed as autistic need to be in special education classrooms.	f	0	8	4	6	2	2.9
		%	0	40	20	30	10	
8	All efforts should be made to educate CWSN in the regular education classroom.	f	0	0	3	14	3	4
		%	0	0	15	70	15	
9	Students who are diagnosed as mentally retarded should be in special education classes.	f	0	3	9	6	2	2.65
		%	0	15	45	30	10	
10	Students who are verbally aggressive towards others can be maintained in regular education classrooms.	f	0	0	3	16	1	3.9
		%	0	0	15	80	5	
SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, M-Mean								

Table 4 shows that almost all the teachers felt that all children with special needs should be included in the regular classroom (M8 = 4). Some teachers (30%) agreed and very few (10%) teachers strongly agreed that students diagnosed with autism and mental retardation should be placed in special classes and others were neutral. But none of the teachers disagreed to the placement of children with autism and mental retardation in special schools. This shows that generally they agree that all children should be placed in regular classrooms, but in context of children with specific disabilities their opinions varied. Hence, it can be said that,

though the teachers agreed with the idea of inclusive educational practices, they also found inclusion to be case specific, that is whether the child should be placed in regular or special school would depend on the severity and type of disability. During the focus group discussion, a similar observation was recorded that although teachers appreciated the philosophy of inclusion but they argued that it was a theoretical concept which was difficult to be implemented in schools.

The teachers from one of the inclusive schools shared that the provisions in their school are adequately planned. The school had regular meetings and workshops for teachers and parents of CWSN. There were also counselors and special educators for each grade and the teachers have freedom to work according to the child's needs. This shows that teachers from inclusive schools were better prepared and had better understanding about CWSN due to the provisioning that was done in their schools. Thus, it can be said that including CWSN to the school could be done when the whole school is involved in the process along with the teachers.

Theme 4: Creativity in Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

The item related to this theme were – 2, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

Table 5
Theme 4

S.No.	Items		SD	D	N	A	SA	M
2	Children with special needs can also be called differently-abled as they also possess different abilities in them.	<i>f</i>	3	0	1	13	3	3.65
		%	15	0	5	65	15	
12	I observed creative manifestations in my classroom while dealing with CWSN.	<i>f</i>	0	1	2	16	1	3.85
		%	0	5	10	80	5	
13	Every child has creative potentialities, as a teacher we can nurture that further.	<i>f</i>	0	0	0	13	7	4.35
		%	0	0	0	65	35	
16	According to me, exploring creative potentialities among CWSN is a very challenging task.	<i>f</i>	0	0	0	14	6	4.3
		%	0	0	0	70	30	

Creativity amongst Children with Special Needs (CWSN):...

17	There are various factors in school that helps in fostering creative abilities of CWSN.	<i>f</i>	0	0	6	14	0	3.7
		%	0	0	30	70	0	
20	I can design activities to explore creative potentialities among CWSN.	<i>f</i>	0	3	7	10	0	3.35
		%	0	15	35	50	0	
21	My educational background acquaints me well to identify creative potentialities in CWSN.	<i>f</i>	0	3	11	6	0	3.15
		%	9	15	55	30	0	
22	I am able to use various teaching strategies to deal with CWESN while focusing on their creative potentialities.	<i>f</i>	0	3	12	5	0	3.1
		%	0	15	60	25	0	
23	Being a teacher, I can design activities which can help to nurture creative potentialities in CWSN.	<i>f</i>	0	2	9	9	0	3.35
		%	0	10	45	45	0	
24	In/out of my class CWSN often expressed creative potentialities in one or another way.	<i>f</i>	0	2	2	16	0	3.7
		%	0	10	10	80	0	
25	I am provided with sufficient in-service training through my school/state which allows me the ability to identify and nurture creative potentialities in children with special needs.	<i>f</i>	0	12	7	1	0	2.45
		%	0	60	35	5	0	
SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, M-Mean								

About 65 per cent of teachers agreed that as CWSN possessed different abilities, they can be called differently-abled. Thus, it can be inferred that most teachers believed that other than impairments, the CWSN also had other abilities that need to be nurtured. However, few teachers (15%) disagreed to this proposition. During the focus group discussion, researchers tried to understand the reasons for difference in opinion amongst teachers. It was found that teachers who didn't have any experience with CWSN, and were not able to interact or engage with them, it was difficult for them to discuss or acknowledge the abilities present in these children. Also, they had very little understanding about their role with respect to

nurturance of creativity among CWSN. Low mean value (M16 = 1.7, Negative Statement) showed that significant numbers of teachers agreed that exploring creative potentialities amongst CWSN was a challenging task.

Responses of the teachers were analysed school wise, which showed that teachers from special schools and inclusive schools had positive attitude towards CWSN and hence has positive outlook for their creative manifestations as well. As quoted by one of the teachers *".....is diagnosed with cerebral palsy.....he is very good at creative activities. He shows his interest in stories and dramas."* On the other hand, teachers from regular schools (whether private or government) were neutral or indifferent towards CWSN. One of the government school teacher said *"...till now I did not encounter a child with special needs in my classroom, I do not have any experience in this regard"*. One of teachers from inclusive school shared her experience with a child with hyperactivity. She shared that this child had creative language skills and was way ahead in comparison to rest of the class. The teacher thus realised that while his hyperactivity can be seen as leading to special need, he also had creative abilities. Another teacher from private school shared about a girl with low vision who was very good at dancing and singing. The teacher shared that this girl lacked peer acceptance and thus she felt that her dancing and singing was one of the ways of expressing herself. This shows that teachers who have direct experience with CWSN and engaged with them on a regular basis along with support from special educators were found to observe creative aspects of children also.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the present study, most of the teachers shared about the heterogeneity that existed in their classrooms by virtue of child's culture, developmental differences, varied abilities and diverse backgrounds that showed that the teachers were cognizant about the learners in their classrooms and their contexts. This showed their close engagement with their learners and re-emphasises the fact that the teachers' perception is one of the most important ways for understanding children's abilities. A study done by Fortner (1986), on students with learning disability, showed that on providing training on creative productive-thinking, writing skills of students were found to have significantly increased. Thus the intervention by the teachers and their role in understanding the

learners is very essential. Through analysis of the data collected and teachers' responses during FGD, it was observed that the teachers from inclusive set up got sufficient opportunities to interact effectively with CWSN and hence had positive attitude towards them. They could discuss and share significant instances where they had observed creative potentialities among CWSN as compared to other teachers. Similarly, teachers who are working in inclusive schools had experience of working collaboratively with special educators who through appropriate interventions, helped regular teachers to engage with CWSN in the classroom. Girl and Lim (1998) shared the same understanding in their research where they investigated the social perceptions and connotations of the terms 'creativity' and 'disability'. They collected the data from two groups of teachers; one who worked with people with disabilities and another group comprised of teachers who didn't work with or were not directly involved with people with disabilities on regular basis. Findings of the study revealed that teachers who worked with people with disabilities had positive inclination towards them as compared to those teachers who were not exposed to people with disabilities. This implies that teacher education programmes should include curricular experiences that engage the pre-service as well as in-service teachers with collaborative models of teaching where regular school teacher understands how they can work for CWSN by teaming up with special educators and their parents. This would help the teachers to understand that collaborating with others was one of the essential ways in which they can focus and discuss the needs that were arising out of the potentialities amongst the CWSN rather than only addressing their needs due to their respective impairments or disadvantaged positions.

The study also pointed out that the school ethos and culture that gets nurtured towards inclusion by the active contribution from the authorities of the school leads to have positive experiences amongst the teachers. Few government school teachers shared that they wanted to put efforts for CWSN in their classrooms, but they did not have resources and guidance to work in that direction. All teachers specifically from regular schools felt the need to upgrade themselves with various teaching strategies and pedagogies which would help them to plan experiences for nurturing all kinds of needs that arise from abilities as well as disabilities in the classroom. Julka (2006) also highlighted some issues in this direction that is

regarding the lack of teacher preparation and training in responding to the needs of children with disabilities, which is a reflection on the inadequate preparation of teachers to address diversity in the classroom. Therefore, it can be said that we need to strengthen our pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes in such a way that empowers the teachers with content, pedagogy, values and technologies so that diverse needs of children could be addressed. The present study also showed that most of the teachers had only the popular idea about creativity and have shared that they had gathered very limited understanding about creativity during their teacher education programme which has also been found in the study conducted by Girl and Lim (1998). Thus, teacher education programmes should include the contemporary ideas of creativity that represent various perspectives of creativity including domain specific creativity and everyday creativity. Teachers also pointed out the need of seminar and workshops on periodic basis for updating themselves and also to put forward issues that they faced during their teaching even after getting help from special educator. During focus group discussion, experiences shared by one of the teacher from an inclusive school showed that inclusion where all children's needs as well as potentialities are equally acknowledged by the teachers required efforts, preparation and involvement from the whole school. That is, along with teachers other school personnel must equally participate in the process. Dever and Hamill (1998) conducted a study on teachers, which mainly focused on teachers' understanding and their roles in the process of inclusion of children with special needs in general school settings. One of the findings showed that there was a lack of administrative support in implementation of inclusionary practices which in turn lead to environment of stress and pressure for teachers in school. Present study puts forward the same issue and has emphasised the need of positive contribution from the whole school in being crucial for inclusion to be achieved. Thus, it can be said that the true inclusion can happen only when we start looking beyond the impairments or disadvantages of the CWSN and start focusing on their other creative potentialities so that they could be appropriately nurtured. This requires that our teacher education programs should bring a change in the attitude of teachers towards inclusion; only then can we expect that the true potential of our children with special needs would get acknowledged.

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