



UNIVERSITATEA "BABES – BOLYAI"

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Faculty of Psychology and Education

DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

**"Integrating Autistic Children in the Regular Education System, Its
Effect and Benefits and the Implications for the Normative
Population"**

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Abstract

Key words: Children with autism; integration of children with special needs; special Education Law; Treatment approaches.

This study engages in the integration of children with Autism into primary schools in the general education system. Integration is not inherent, but rather, develops with time.

The term “integration” had undergone a process of development and metamorphosis reflecting the different approaches to the integration of special needs children into regular education systems.

In its initial sense, the term "integration" referred to assimilation of children with special needs among normal ones. Then, it was labeled "mainstreaming", referring to placing children with special needs in a general classroom, and active integration, which includes the training of individuals with special needs & while morally guiding the community, overcoming barriers related to approaches and attitudes toward the integrated person and developing services to be made available for those individuals (Ronen, 2001).

The Special Education Law (1988) provides a general reflection of the requirement to integrate children with special needs into the general school system, while establishing a foundation for providing necessary conditions for promoting their skills, and aspiring to enhance their physical, cognitive, and mental skills within less restricting environments (Heiman, 1999).

Hen Schulman and Hed (1990) states that attending the same class as the normative children influences autistic children on three main levels:

1. Decreasing strand, maladaptive behaviors;
2. Increase in language use;
3. Enhanced language quality for the purpose of communication.

The need to integrate autistic children into the regular school system derives from the significance of training them to social life and integration into society. They have to be provided with tools for developing proper social skills. Autistic children are characterized by their lack or faulty social skills, and need integration so they will be able to imitate the behavior of normative children.

Fleishman (1999) argues that a child with Autism, characterized by communicative and social difficulties, needs the integration into normal environments the most.

Practically, information from research and treatment institutions in the United States reveals that the rehabilitation of autistic children is indeed possible following their integration into normative education frameworks (Rimland, 1998; Kasher, 2003; Tzachor, 2004). Current theory and findings reveal that integration policies are essentially appropriate; still there is a need to search for ways to improve it, as the autistic children's main difficulty is their inability to communicate with their surroundings. To this day, there has been an ongoing debate as to whether or not integration of children with Autism into the general education system is beneficial for the child and his environments.

This research reviews the characteristics of autistic children and the approaches taken thus far regarding their integration in Israel and other countries in the world.

The research presents the advantages and disadvantages of integration today, and the influence of integration expressed in the education system, on the autistic children, their peers and the family, while examining the Israeli special education law, the amendment to the integration clause and its implementation in the field.

The research examined the influence of integration on the normative integrating population, focusing mostly on the academic and social domains, in an attempt to assess how this integration influences the normative children and the perception of the integrating teachers.

A comparison was made between two school types: a school integrating autistic children based on a philosophy, and a school where integration is based on the local authority's administrative decision.

The research also examined whether integration constitutes a part of a qualitative educational program which influences the school's teaching-learning processes and the school's climate.

In this researcher's opinion, if integration is to benefit society, and influence the integrating children, the approach to it has to be holistic. School policy is to be based upon values, beliefs, expectations, and information regarding the pupils' disabilities. The relevant educational system, be it the school or the kindergarten, is required to allocate resources for integration. The material resources required for special needs children are to correspond with their disability, out of believing in the pupils and staff's ability to apply integration. Integration, which constitutes a part of a overall therapeutic program, which advances the autistic child, has to consider the integrating children as well. Management has to regard integration as a value in itself and educate the pupils for accepting those who are different and respect their needs without causing damage to the integrating children. A school that educates its pupils towards integrating special needs children in general and autistic children in particular nurtures social values which will, in turn, become caring, mindful citizens, so their contribution to society will be more effective and their motivation increased. It is this researcher's believe that integrating teachers have a high moral and caring level and contribute to a better society.

Theoretical Rationale

Autism is a syndrome which may be attributed to multiple both genetic and non-genetic causes. Autism refers to a wide spectrum of developmental disorders, characterized by deficiencies in three behavioral aspects, social interaction, language and communication, as well as ritual, stereotypical behaviors, which render the disorder's spectrum of causes and characteristics quite confusing, thus the diagnosis process is more complex. Yet the doctors must diagnose Autism immediately, in order to guarantee effective treatment (Muhle, Trentacoste & Rapin, 2004). Since the specific cause of Autism is not yet certain, the many etiological approaches support the common approach, according to which the syndrome is heterogeneously behavioral, in terms of etiology (Or & Yirmiyahu, 1993). Yet this approach does not

resolve the issue of modifying the treatment of this rather complicated disorder, as even after it has been identified, there are several degrees to it on the spectrum, which will be broadly discussed in due course.

The review implies that failure to diagnose Autism early in the child's life poses difficulties in beginning proper treatment, and in making a decision as to the way in which the child will be treated. However, a great change has occurred over the years in the ability to accurately diagnose and identify Autism, with no erroneous diagnosis identifying children with Autism as mentally retarded, in several instances. The past failure to accurately diagnose, caused confusion, and in many instances resulted in incompatible treatment, which, at times, would even cause damage and regression in development.

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder, which usually emerges by the age of three. Epidemiology studies have reported of two to five Autism cases per every 10,000 infants who were born in 1985, while later than 2000, the numbers increased to up to 26-30 thousand Autism cases per every 10,000 newborns (Lintas & Presico, 2008). In past decades, researchers in the field of Autism have widely agreed about the disorder's neurological basis, a severe handicap in communicative skills (Abiri & Azulay, 2004).

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As deep as one may delve into history, it is impossible to come across an unequivocal definition, by which an individual with Autism may be identified. Furthermore, various fields have been involved in the discourse on the issue, especially the neurological, psychological, and psychiatric fields. It is a fascinating discourse, presenting diverse classifications and developments of the definitions, based upon the vast knowledge which has been accumulating through the years, and, more

importantly, the professional identification, which allows a practical examination of the syndrome on the spectrum.

Since the end of the last century, awareness has increased regarding the field of Autism in the scientific and medical communities, as well as in the public, resulting in improved diagnosis and identification ability. In addition, the therapeutic and rehabilitative services for the population diagnosed with Autism have expanded and become more professional. Any attempt to connect that population to environment-related causes as immunizations, level of mercury, or any other toxins has not been proven. A research which will examine whether or not a “real” epidemiological increase in prevalence of Autism exists is yet required (Tzachor, 2008).

The various perceptions concerning the child with Autism’s identification imply the failure to establish a uniform classification, which will allow an accurate identification of the child with Autism. Autism is a comprehensive developmental disorder, usually emerging within the first 36 months of life (Or & Yirmiyahu, 1993). Surprisingly, epidemiological studies reported of two to five Autism cases per 10,000 infants born in 1985, while after 2000, the number grew up to 20-60 Autism cases per 10,000 newborns (Lintas & Persico, 2008).

DSM-4-R (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2000) expanded the criteria for the autistic disorder, so as to include developmental changes in the syndrome’s manifestation. The criteria presented in that manual are more specified than before. Additionally, the manual no longer refers to the age of emergence as a vital diagnostic parameter. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD 10), which was published approximately at that time, differs from the DSM, both by the types of disorders categorized as PDD, and by the criteria upon which the classification of Autism is drawn. Autism is indeed described as a life-long developmental disability which may be treated. While the treatment will not cure the child, it will certainly lead to progress, and may result in improved quality of life. Hence, early diagnosis and accurate classification of Autism’s degree are vital.

In recent years, the issue of treatment of Autism has developed. Consequently, the diagnosis ability has improved, resulting in identification of the broad spectrum at a very early age. There is no good or bad treatment, but rather, but suiting or not suiting

the child's needs and personality. In most cases, the therapist assesses treatment via trial and error, which may lead to regression in the development of the autistic child.

Diagnosing a child classified within the autistic spectrum constitutes a complex challenge for the parents and the education system. Not only does the diagnosis bear emotional ramifications, but also requires parents' immediate decision as for the therapeutic approach, treatment modes, and professionals which will correspond with the children's needs. The challenge lying within the treatment mode selection stems from the autistic disorder's nature, multiplicity of therapeutic approaches, and contradicting information which parents receive from an array of sources.

The autistic disorder is characterized by a pervasive disorder, which damages several systems and functions. Children classified under the autistic spectrum, suffer from social deficiencies, lingual-communicative deficiencies, as well as narrow fields of interest and repetitive behaviors. The disorder is often complemented by other problems, such as sleeping and eating disorders, maladaptive behavior, and sensory regulation disorders. The presence and degree of severity of those characteristics may vary from one child to another. Parents whose child displays a variety of difficulties are faced with the challenging decision, as to which field requires an immediate treatment, and what type of a professional will most effectively respond to the problem.

The ever-growing prevalence of diagnosed autistic-spectrum children has caused a multiplicity of therapeutic plans which rely upon an array of therapeutic principles. Some plans have withstood the research critique standards, while others have not been thus documented.

Despite the fact that the various therapeutic programs differ from each other by their basic philosophy, and emphasis of various strategies, some insights are common for therapists of various approaches Meyers et al., 2007; National Research Council, 2001).

1. Treatment should begin as early as possible. Treatment at a young age allows acquisition of skills, beneficent from brain's plasticity in development of neural networks in various functioning areas in the brain.

2. The treatment should be intensive, consisting of at least 20-25 weekly clinical hours for 12 months a year. Additionally, the treatment should be conducted individually, or in small group.
3. The treatment should consist of the child's family's involvement, and supervision. The degree of involvement may range from various programs in which parents function as caregivers, to participation in parents' consultation session concerning home coping behaviors.
4. The treatment should correspond with the child's needs, focusing on communicative and social skill as key components. The program will involve acquisition of daily skills, for the sake of preparing the child toward functional independence, reduction of undesired behaviors,
5. Treatment should also be characterized by degrees of structure, by implementing familiar routines, and should be based upon behavioral principles. In various approaches, professionals apply various treatment structure degrees.
6. Program should be conducted in an array of situations. Because of autistic children's well-known challenge of generalizing existing knowledge in various situations, skills which have been acquired should be practiced in different physical environments, with different people, and in different occurrences.
7. There is significance to implementing acquired skills also in interaction with other children. Therefore, treatment should include interaction with children mediated by the professional.

The issue of integrating autistic children into the normative education system has been through a rather complex process until we have reached a state where this integration is has become a matter of routine.

One of the dilemmas is related to the extent of autistic child's cognitive readiness for being integrated into a regular class. Thus, at present, programs have been developed in order to prepare autistic children prior to their entrance into an integrated school framework, so as to guarantee the child receives the most effective preparation. The "Mifne" Approach is an example of such a program developed by "Mifne" Association, which has been active since 1987, providing comprehensive treatment

for families coping with raising young children whose development is delayed, and who have been diagnosed with communication disorders, on the Autism continuum. The organization is a pioneer the full integration of children with connection and communication disorders into the general education system in Israel. The “Mifne” Approach includes both the children and the parents. The program’s basic assumption is its power to fulfill the right of a child with high cognitive potential to be involved with normally developing children, so as to allow him or her to adopt social behavior patterns to be gradually employed throughout the development process (Alonim & Arieli, 2002).

At the end of the 1990’s, and early into the 21st century, the tendency of integrating the special needs child into the normal society became more prevalent in the United States, Europe, and Israel. The integration concept is but an inseparable part of the normalization idea, defined by Michaelson, director of Service for special Needs Children in Denmark. The normalization concept maintains that the special needs child should not be separated from his normal surroundings before all prospects for his successful adjustment to it have been exhausted (Ronen, 2001). This concept articulates the view that any handicapped individual is entitled to education, a life environment as close as possible to the norm, and maximum integration into the general society. This assumption expresses the philosophical-humanistic perception, accepting that any handicapped individual is entitled to education and a life environment as normative as possible (Whitney & Reiter, 2006). The normalization concept refers to integration as a means of acquiring social and cognitive skills among pupils with Autism, which will render their behavior more normative (Whitney & Reiter, 2006).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, two major effects of normalization were apparent in the education system: The first step included the closing of boarding institutions, transferring the children back into the community, and to special schools, which allowed for interaction within the neighborhood and with the families. Second, children with special needs were placed in a variety of general education frameworks. This process was labeled "mainstreaming": getting the special needs children as close as possible to the mainstream of society and the norm (Heiman, 1999). The research

addresses the discourse between these two trends while examining the influence of integration on both populations with an emphasis on the integrating population.

In Israel, several special structures were established in the northern part of the country for children with Autism as of 1985. Each such structure serves children with various degrees of Autism, from children with mental retardation and other Autism-related handicaps, to children who study academic subjects in correspondence with their chronological age. Those structures provide each pupil with the academic support system, and the additional therapies he requires. Those structures integrate pupils who may benefit from integration, by an individual integration plan. The more the pupil benefits from integration, both emotionally and practically, he will more effectively integrate, potentially achieving full integration.

The Special Education law is the first one to be legislated in Israel in 1988; the law ruled that “The Special Education Law rules that placement committee is required to prioritize the integration of a special needs child into a regular framework. The privilege of attending a normative framework is one of a handicapped person’s privileges to live in a community, actively and equally participating in its activities. That ruling corresponds with educational approaches, which emphasize the significance of instilling normative behavior to special needs children, while forming a more tolerant society (Director General Circular, 1988).

In 2002, following a legislation initiative led by “Bizchut” organization, the Special Education Law was amended, and appended by a clause concerning integration of special needs children into the general education system. This section rules that a special needs child’s entitlement, if integrated into the general education system, includes additional teaching and tutoring, as well as special services, which will facilitate the child’s integration. The entitlement also includes a structured process. From that point on, school committees will rule the child’s entitlement to inclusion in the school’s integration program, and the special services to be provided to him, based upon a list approved by the law; aid equipment, assistance services, psychological services, paramedical services, and any other service decreed by Education Minister’s order (Director General Circular, 2003/10b).

Gap in Knowledge

So far, the literature review yielded very few studies engaging in integrating autistic children into the regular education system, as the issue of integration has only been on the agenda some 10 years, and children with Autism have only been dealt with in the last five years. This gap in knowledge led to the need of this research.

Integration of autistic children into the general education system is a result of parental demand, as parents wished their children to enroll in schools close to their places of residence. Though this has been going on for some years, the effectiveness of integration has not yet been researched. A few parameters in their progress have been studied, but no research has addressed the questions what happens to the integrating children in the regular classes, what price they pay, whether integration, the attention and the support they need delays their progress and whether social damage is caused to them.

This research examined the influence of integration on integrating children from a variety of perspectives and adds knowledge about how to integrate and how to help autistic children to integrate without causing any damage to the integrating children. The research reveals the contribution to both integrated and integrating children and proposes ways of coping with the difficulties arising from integration.

The research adds new knowledge regarding the significance of integration and its application, and found that placing autistic children in a regular class causes the normative children to develop sensitivity to others and awareness of the special needs children have. Autistic children make progress mostly on the social level as they learn to imitate the normative children's behavior.

Research Goals

The research had the following goals:

- ❖ To examine the significance of Special Education Law (1988) in Israel, and especially the Amendment to the Integration Clause (2003), its implications

and application, focusing on the integration policy, its advantages and disadvantages, in the context of integrating children with autism.

- ❖ To explore the effects of integrating children with autism into the general education system, on the teachers on the integrating population

The research contributed to understanding the needs of children with Autism when integrated into a general education system, the costs versus the benefits for their academic and especially social progress.

The research developed insights regarding the rationale for integration assuming integration enables autistic children to imitate the behavior of normative children, as claimed by theory. According to theory and findings, integration as a policy is basically correct, but an attempt must be made as per how to apply it correctly

The Research Questions:

- ❖ What is the effect of the integration of children with autism on the integrating teachers and pupils' population, from the academic and social perspectives, and the contribution of integration?
- ❖ Is there a difference between teachers working in a special integrative school and teachers who work in a regular integrative school, according to the following aspects: teaching quality, teaching pace and teaching motivation?

Research Paradigm

This research is a mixed-methods study, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2009).

In this research, understanding the meaning of integration of children with autism requires research in their natural learning environments, where their behaviors may be observed. Thus, implementing a qualitative research method renders the research practical, genuine, and authentic (Tzabar Ben Yehoshua, 2001).

To allow for generalization from the sample to the general population, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed (Bryman, 2004; Shkedi, 2003). Additionally, in the quantitative part of this research questionnaires were administered which allowed for statistical analysis, and in the qualitative stage, interviews and observations were analyzed so as to understand perceptions, attitudes and feelings (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001).

Methodology – Research Design, Population and Research Tools

The research was conducted in three schools, and the researcher spent some 6 months in the field. One school was a special integrative school integrating autistic children as a matter of choice, and the other two schools were regular integrative schools integrating autistic children due to administrative local authority considerations based on registration zones.

The research engaged in three main populations: teachers, children and integration coordinators. Interviews were conducted with principals, teachers and teams from different domains: counselors and special education teachers.

Research Population

The sample was created based on the following criteria:

- ❖ Ages 8 – 14;
- ❖ Integration – two years or more;
- ❖ Medium or above level of autism
- ❖ Children from three schools in the center of Israel: a special integrative school and two regular integrative schools.
- ❖ Teachers from the three schools: teachers who integrate autistic children in their classes and teachers who do not, as well as English and mathematics teachers.

❖ Integration coordinators of the Autistic children.

The research engaged in the description of the integration of autistic children into normative society and focused on the contribution of integration to the normative population. Triangulation was used to validate the findings

Research Tools

Questionnaires for pupils and teachers were devised by the researcher specifically for this research. This research used questionnaires whose purpose was to examine the views of each population as for the contribution of integration, as well as its effect on the integrating population. Questionnaires allow the subject to closely read the questions and to respond without the pressure of time, while the researcher is not present. The questionnaires were administered the adult population, as there are difficulties in administering questionnaires to young children some of whom have learning disabilities. Pupils' questionnaires were mediated by the researcher while teachers were not involved, so as to allow the children to answer honestly without being intimidated. The questionnaires were anonymous. The questionnaires were also directed at populations that are not only directed connected to the cases, but also to other school teachers in an attempt to examine the influence of integrating children with Autism on the school level. The questionnaires were statistically analyzed.

Interviews: Interview questions were devised by the researcher for the purpose of this research. The interviews examined the participants' views and feelings regarding the children's integration. The interviews also include the subjective attitudes of the teaching staff and the management. The researcher had interviewed the principals of the integrating schools, in order to examine their view of the integration approach. In addition, an open discourse was conducted with some teachers as a colleagues' discussion, which added a significant layer to the research findings.

Some of the interviews had been conducted with teachers who filled the questionnaires, in order to triangulate views and themes from the questionnaires. Those will be focus interviews.

Since interviews take time, the researcher sampled interviewees from each population which filled in the questionnaires, so as to validate the information yielded by them.

Observations: No planned observations were conducted. However, the researcher spent a good deal of time in each of the three schools, which enabled her to observe what was happening in the schools, observing the breaks, participating in two informal events and the school's lifestyle, which enhanced understanding of integration at its most profound levels. These unplanned observations thickened the findings and added to the understanding of the integration phenomenon and the conclusions drawn from the findings regarding integration and its influence on integrated and integrating children.

Research Tools and Their Goals

Research Tools	Target Population	Goal
Interviews	Teachers, principals and integration coordinators	Examination of their attitudes to the integration of autistic children from the human and social perspective; Examination of the contribution of integration to the teachers and pupils on the whole school level.
Questionnaires	Teachers and pupils	Examination of their attitudes to and difficulties in the integration of autistic children into their classes or schools from the academic, social and emotional perspectives. The contribution of integration to the integrated children Examination of the academic, social and emotional influence of integrating an autistic child on the integrating children

Research Stages

- ❖ Reading theoretical literature pertaining to the research topic concerning the last 15 years;
- ❖ Identifying schools for the research;
- ❖ Meetings with the schools' principals for setting research schedules;
- ❖ Interviews with staff;
- ❖ Questionnaires;
- ❖ Data analysis and discussion;
- ❖ Insights and conclusions.

Data Analysis Methods

The research model is a comparative one, and hence, data analysis was conducted on two levels: In the preliminary stage One Way ANOVA was conducted among the three types of classes (teachers and pupils) on a variety of research variables. In the second data analysis stage Multiple ANOVA was conducted on the dependent research variables, whereby the independent variables were the type of class and some additional variable (specific variables for pupils, and others, for teachers).

Research Findings

The findings reveal that a significant adult's intervention as a mediator in the learning process is one of the most important aspects of integration. The more significant the teacher to the child and the more the teachers know how to help the autistic child, the more advancement the child will make and teaching-learning quality will improve. As depicted in the literature, when the class includes children with special needs in general and Autistic children in particular, the teacher should undergo training and regular supervision, which will assist him/her in handling problems arising throughout integration. The teacher has to be a partner in the autistic children learning process. In addition, the autistic child needs an integration coordinator, who will mediate learning. Without adult intervention and mediation there will be no learning.

In the special integrative school, teachers regard their role with the integrated Autistic child as part of their teaching philosophy and life style. In the regular integrative schools, teachers regard integration as a value that is significant for all the children, not necessarily the Autistic ones.

The findings of this research which examined the influence of integration on the integrated children reveal that the integration of children with special needs into the regular education system benefits the normative pupils as well, as the teacher is sensitive to the needs of all the pupils, and adjusts the teaching pace accordingly. The teacher builds the lesson in a way that he/she can make time for helping those who need to be helped. Integration helps teachers understand and respect people with different personality traits, develops mutual support, as found in previous research – a society which integrates Autistic children and becomes caring and supportive, yields results whereby the academic level of all the children is not compromised (Tzachor, 2004; Hermon, 2009).

The findings reveal that not only is teaching not compromised, but also the integrating children benefit from significant learning due to the variety of teaching styles. Teachers who are properly trained learn to cope with the heterogeneous class, learn how to teach in a variety of ways so that all of the pupils benefit from it.

Embracing different, innovative ways which allow the child to complete assignments and present the materials he or she has learned. It is important to note that Autistic children may not always be expected to demonstrate knowledge in writing, because of their poor motor skills. Thus, they should be allowed to do so through other means and additional time (Marks et. al., 2003).

The research compared the regular integrative school to the special integrative school, whose philosophy and culture are integration-based; the principal regards the integration of children with Autism to be part of the educational credo and the school's culture. This helps integration, but it also contributes to the integrating children and staff. Staff members receive professional and emotional support from management.

The principal regards teacher training to be a “support package” provided to the teachers in integrative classes. The principal plans the in-service course and makes sure it includes topics which help the integrating teachers become familiar with the integrated child’s needs and know how to meet those needs without harming the other pupils in the class. In the regular integrative school training was not as comprehensive and was limited to a one-time lecture. The teachers learnt on their own, and stated they would like to get more explanation and guidance pertaining to the integration of Autistic children.

Training has to be on-going. Research reveals that 72% of the teachers feel they are not sufficiently equipped to cope with Autistic children. It is important to understand that the teacher’s work is complex and hard even without having to cope with special needs pupils. For integration to succeed there is a need for a support system to help the teachers. Teachers have to be constantly guided and trained, so as to help them cope with integration problems (Gillen, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher is a director of an education department of the Ramt-Gan Municipality. It was therefore stipulated that the research be conducted in another city. The Chief Scientist in the Ministry of Education approved the research provided it would not be conducted in Ramat Gan, so that the participants would answer questions objectively and without bias. This need to look for schools in another city delayed the beginning of the research.

The researcher is a well known educational figure in the Tel-Aviv region and had to be ethically careful not to harm the research process and reliability on the one hand, and not to exploit her status and role with stake holders in the researched school. Since the researcher is highly experienced, she had to make special efforts to remain neutral as possible to maintain objectivity.

Future Research

The issue of parents and their role in their autistic children's integration into the normative education system has not been examined in this research, as it mostly focused on the education system. The research examined what is happening in the schools, the contribution of integration to the autistic children and the influence of this integration on the normative children's population within school boundaries .

Parental involvement is of great significance, and it is what led to changing the law. However, the amendment to the Special Education Law of 2000 did not consider the influence of integration on the normative population and on the education system as a whole .

When special needs children, those diagnosed as autistic in particular, are integrated, and their numbers are growing, the parents of normative children also influence integration, often by objecting to it. Not all parents are happy for their children to share a class with a child diagnosed on the autistic spectrum. It is recommended to research this issue so as to augment to the picture pertaining to the influence of integration on autistic children .

Significance and Meaning of the Research

The research examined the autistic spectrum as an increasing phenomenon. Throughout the research, the phenomenon of autism unfolded, and yet, more is unknown than known in that domain. Over the years, care-givers, whether in the neurological domain or in the psychiatric domain, have succeeded in diagnosing autism early on, and if diagnosed early, more can be done for the autistic child.

Early diagnosis led to the development of different treatments and approaches to autistic children. Both the theories and the current research findings, integration as a policy is the proper thing to do, and indeed, this research examined the influence of integration on the autistic child and the society around him/her. Since the autistic children's main difficulty is in the social interaction domain, integration must be gradual with constant evaluation of the child's progress .

The approach to integration has to be holistic, and the school has to create an “envelope of support” for teachers, so that they succeed at integrating the autistic child without harming the other children .

This research found that the integration issue arouses debate among the general population, but the research focused on the influence of integration on the normative children and their teachers, but in most cases in the literature, numerous findings are presented regarding the autistic children, but only a few pertaining to the influence on the normative population .

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