

Review of: "Challenges of Learners with Disabilities in Open Schools in India"

Giampiero Tarantino¹

¹ University of Dublin, Trinity College

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This piece of work is interesting and describes how students with disabilities are educated within the Indian Educational System. From someone who does not know much about the Indian Educational System, this article provides great insights regarding the challenges that students with disabilities and special educational needs encounter during their educational process.

It was particularly worthwhile to read about the accommodations that students with disabilities and special educational needs have in Open Schools in India. However, the questionnaire delivered to the students captured the discrepancies between the provision of accommodations and facilities and the actual students' needs. In this sense, I can see the opportunities that the findings from this work can provide to policymakers. This is an excellent example of how research can inform school governing authorities, which could advocate for school-based practices to support the enactment of inclusive pedagogy within schools (Hernández-Torrano et al. 2020).

This work also showed how the implementation of the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines can be a helpful strategy for educators. Findings from this work align very well with previous research, which has shown that UDL can improve the learning process for learners with and without special educational needs and disabilities (Seok, DaCosta, and Hodge, 2018) by providing different 'ways of accessing knowledge' than can be considered beneficial both for students and classroom teachers (Capp, 2017).

However, I have a few concerns about this paper.

- a. Firstly, the ethical approval for this research is missing in the paper. This is my major concern, particularly when you consider the fact that this research has been conducted on a population that can be considered vulnerable (i.e., learners with disabilities and special educational needs). Despite participants being enrolled through the National Institute of Open School, ethical approval is needed and should be provided. Therefore, I would suggest providing information regarding ethical approval.
- b. Even though the author reported some data, I feel that more details are needed. For example, it would have been helpful to have some data regarding the pre-test score in the control and experimental groups. This would have enabled controlling for baseline scores and investigating any differences in the groups before the intervention. Also, even though the author mentioned the employment of inferential statistics, more details regarding the statistical analyses are needed. For example, which statistical package was used?

- c. It would also have helped to have more details regarding the Science Achievement test upon which the scores were evaluated. In this sense, the author mentioned that three tools were used in the study: (i) questionnaire; (ii) Content on UDL principles; and (iii) Pre-test and post-test tools. It would have helped to describe these tools in the methods sections. For example, which type of questions were asked in the questionnaire?
- d. Finally, I also feel that more references are needed to support some statements. For example, the author mentioned that Open and Distance Learning promotes a barrier-free environment that encourages education free from all kinds of limitations (pag. 3, lines 1-2). However, research has shown a variety of barriers influencing distance learning in India (Abuhammad, 2020; Kamble et al., 2021).

Overall, I think that this article provides interesting insights regarding the Indian educational system and the perceptions of students with disabilities and special educational needs about the challenges and the accommodations. However, this article has a few major flaws. First, the lack of clarity regarding the ethical approval, the instruments used (questionnaire and pre- post-test tools), and the analysis conducted should be addressed. Secondly, the introduction should be supported by research evidence and a clear rationale for conducting this research should be provided. Finally, the conclusion should be framed within international research evidence and address some implications that these findings might have (i.e., the importance of learners' viewpoints in changing the policy and practice within schools).

References

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