

Types of education impacting people with mental disabilities

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Education is the vehicle that allows for students to accomplish their dreams. It is deeply influential as it encompasses the majority of one's early years, and continues throughout life. This subsequently allows for an accumulation of knowledge, which provides skills leading to success. Thus, education is essential to life and necessary for every human being. Because all people are different, there must be many types of education in order to categorize and accommodate the various types of people. In the novel *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes and modern sources, the authors explore how different forms of education affect people with mental disabilities.

In Keyes's novel and the article "Systems of Care for the Mentally Retarded" by John Noone, the authors discuss the impact of mental institutions on their patients. When the households of mentally disabled people are unsuitable for providing care, they usually live in a mental institution where they can learn. Thus, it can be considered a form of education. If an institution has major flaws, it will inevitably have an adverse effect on its inhabitants. In *Flowers for Algernon*, when a psychologist is talking about the people on the waiting list to enter the Warren State Home, he claims that the 1,400 people on the waiting list are at "[h]ome. On the outside, waiting for an opening here or in some other institution.

You see, our space problem is not like the usual hospital overcrowding. Our patients usually come here to stay for the rest of their lives" (Keyes 227). A major flaw of the Warren State Home is its overcrowding – because the mental institution is full, the people on the waiting list are unable to enter the home. That means that over a thousand disabled people at home are left

without the care they deserve, which demonstrates how a flaw of mental institutions can adversely affect people with mental disabilities. The Warren State Home also impacts the inhabitants themselves, having a more positive effect on the patients rather than those on the waiting list.

Because “ patients usually come here to stay for the rest of their lives,” the home’s long-term services provides sustained care without the need for patients to continuously move from hospital to hospital and thus interrupt education or care. Moreover, the article describes the major flaws that of mental institutions. When Noone visits an institution, he notes that “[s]tate institutions for the mentally retarded are badly underfinanced, understaffed and overcrowded. The standard of care is, in most instances, so grossly deficient as to shock the conscience of all who see them” (Noone 309). The overcrowding in conjunction with understaffing means that there are not enough workers to help the many patients, thus negatively affecting the latter.

Both the physical and mental health would inevitably decrease – there are not enough workers to carry out detailed exams and treatments on all of the patients’ bodies or minds. This home is underfinanced, implying that all of the patients are not receiving the quality care and education that they need and deserve, and because these qualities are found “ in most instances,” many more people with mental disabilities than those in only this institution are being negatively affected by poor quality institutions, with their bodies, minds, and education in jeopardy. Mental institutions have an enormous impact on their patients, and their mix of flaws and strengths reflect that

impact. The authors of the novel and the article “ Secondary Health Educators’ Perceived Self-Efficacy in Teach” describe how both public school settings and teachers affect mentally disabled students. Public schools are not specialized to specifically educate only mentally disabled students, which is a major difference between public schools and mental institutions. When the protagonist of *Flowers for Algernon*, Charlie, is bullied in his school, his teacher “ comes and chases them away.

He takes Charlie into the boys’ room and tells him to wash off the blood and dirt from his face and hands before he goes back home” (Keyes 54-55).

Charlie’s teacher should have specifically looked out for Charlie, as he knows of Charlie’s mental limitations and subsequently his inability to ward off attackers. Instead, he allows for Charlie to be beaten up, negatively affecting Charlie’s physical health. The failure of the teacher to alert Charlie’s parents of this represents the failure of the school to properly take care of mentally disabled kids. By telling Charlie to wash himself, the teacher attempts to hide Charlie’s wounds and thus does not want to tell his parents of the incident, perhaps wanting to avoid a convoluted conflict involving several families.

Therefore, the teacher does not care for his students, especially Charlie, which impacts Charlie’s health and allows for future attacks on him as well. Similarly, the survey conducted in “ Secondary Health Educators’ Perceived Self-Efficacy in Teach” measures many flaws in public school systems, with the respondents of the survey being the teachers themselves. One result shows how “ 54% [of the respondents] rated availability of health education

materials for mentally disabled students as inadequate,” signifying that over half of the responding teachers’ schools have mentally handicapped students that do not have access to sufficient tools for their health knowledge (“ Secondary Health Educators” 243). Health knowledge is vital for all people as it encompasses many types of health, such as physical, mental, and social health. This knowledge can help one reduce hazardous behavior, interact easily with others, and, most importantly, care for one’s own health.

Because mentally handicapped students do not have easy access to this, their mental, physical, and social health may deteriorate as a result. This poor social health exacerbates mentally disabled students’ physical and mental health, linking back to Charlie’s situation when he is beaten up; he cannot communicate, allowing for him to be an easy target for bullying, and his physical and mental condition being negatively impacted as a repercussion of the school’s failures. If these resources could be made more readily available to all students, then public schools could be an academic environment in which students that learn easily could help those who do not, since all of their social skills would be good enough to facilitate conversation and aid between students. Public schools greatly influence their mentally disabled students, so their flaws of not being specialized enough carry immense negative consequences. In the novel and the article “ Disabled Children, Parents and Professionals: Partnership on Whose Terms?” by Pippa Murray, the authors show how parents tutoring their mentally disabled child impacts that child.

Homeschooling can be beneficial to the student because it is specialized for that student, but if the tutors do not teach well, then the student can be negatively impacted and even traumatized. When Charlie's mom attempts to teach Charlie, she comments, " He's normal. There's nothing wrong with him. Just lazy. I'll beat it into him until he learns," demonstrating the violence Charlie faces when being homeschooled (Keyes 290). Charlie will inevitably make mistakes, as one does when learning new skills or information, which means he will be abused by his mother.

The violent environment he is in does not contribute to his education – it actually adversely affects it because Charlie will be too scared of the abuse to focus and learn, which in turn will lead to more abuse and future mental trauma. This deleterious environment is further shown when his mother claims, " There's nothing wrong with him". By denying that Charlie has a mental illness, she does not address it and thus cannot teach him in a specialized way benefiting him. On the other hand, " Disabled Children, Parents and Professionals: Partnership on Whose Terms?" addresses the difficulty of homeschooling mentally disabled children by finding a solution. While Charlie's mother abuses him, the author finds that the " Plowden Report of 1967, which has set the scene for policy and practice of home-school relationships, developed the idea that it was the attitude of parents and the interest they showed in their child's educational progress which outweighed external factors such as family income in influencing a child's educational career" (Murray 687-688).

If parents do not have an encouraging mindset, then their child will have a more difficult time learning. Thus, if the parents are not deeply involved, then their child will be negatively affected. Parents that are too busy to focus on their child will be forced to watch their child struggle, whereas parents with enough time can watch their child succeed. Mentally disabled children are directly influenced by the conditions of their parents, and depending on those conditions, the effects may be either positive or negative. However, if the attitudes of the parents are discouraging, then regardless of their conditions, their mentally disabled child will suffer.

Mentally disabled students can be affected either negatively or positively by homeschooling, depending on the tutor's behavior, attitude, and teaching method. Students with mental disabilities are impacted differently based on the type of education they receive, as explained by the authors of *Flowers for Algernon* and modern sources. Those forms of education all have flaws that negatively affect students, but all have, or could possibly have, strengths as well. There is a stigma present in society that discriminates against the mentally handicapped population. Some people do not know that there is a stigma, while others are proponents of it. Education is the only way to overcome the blatant prejudice against the people with mental disabilities.

If kids are taught to accept people as they are, then they can grow up being familiar with the environment of supporting marginalized groups.

Subsequently, everyone benefits – the people that are not handicapped, since helping others fulfills one's moral duty as a human being; those with

mental disabilities, for they would not be discriminated any longer; and other marginalized groups, who are not discriminated as a result of being in a culture that that does not stigmatize, but supports and heals. Only through education can this ideal society be achieved.