



Disquiet among teachers towards inclusive education programme in government schools of Chandigarh, India

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Abstract

Inclusive Education is a process through which Children with Special Needs are settled into the regular schools with normal children. It is an education system in which each child is welcomed and his/her abilities, capabilities, uniqueness etc. are respected. In this education system children's individual differences are recognized and attention is given to each child accordingly. It has become imperative for the teachers to understand the different needs of each child as they are the vital pillar of education system. It is their responsibility to provide education to children according to their capacities with respect to their individualities. But it is not easy to identify the different and unique needs of special children as the teachers generally do not acquire the knowledge or practice to handle such children. The present study aimed to find out the worries among teachers for Inclusive Education. The researchers collected qualitative data from 200 teachers of twenty Government Schools of Chandigarh (U.T.). Teachers were interviewed and observed regarding their qualms for Inclusive Education. At the end of the study recommendations given by the teachers to overcome the worries for Inclusive Education have also been stated.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teachers, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Worries.

Introduction

Education is a process which is systematic and purposeful that equips the learner with information, accomplishment of skills, ethics and attitudes, which make possible for them to actively get involved in all spheres of life. The centre of the education system is the learner. The process of education will not be worth if it is not able to cater the needs of all the learners¹. It is necessary to provide education to all the learners together without any discrimination. The education system which provides education to children with and without disabilities under the same roof is known as inclusive education.

Inclusion in education means the children with special needs admitted into the regular classrooms with the non-disabled children of the same age. The fundamental value of inclusive education is that every child belongs to the school and is welcomed in the regular classrooms despite of their different needs². In inclusive education different needs, individualities, abilities etc. of the children are noted and education is imparted accordingly.

Three basic principles of inclusive education are; i. setting appropriate learning challenges to teach the children with special needs in a way which suit their different needs, ii. responding to pupils' varied learning requirements to make learning effective and iii. to overcome the obstacles to learning and evaluation for individuals and group of pupils³. Students with special needs learn more and better when are given exposure to the richness of the general curriculum with required

modifications and adaptations. It enhances learning in both disabled and non-disabled children. The goal of this education system is to provide instructions to children with special needs which are needed to be successful as learners, so that they can achieve high standards with other normal peers⁴.

The responsibility is in the hands of the teachers to provide equal and quality education to children with special needs along with the other children. Their role in inclusive education is imperative and crucial. It is the duty of the teachers to identify the different needs of the children, accept them, referring the children to experts for further assistance, developing acceptance among normal children, making the classroom environment healthy and congenial, adapting the teaching techniques and removing the hindrances in the regular classrooms⁵. But most of the general teachers do not have the professional training or knowledge, are not competent and do not have the confidence to deal the children with exceptional needs⁶. Therefore it is crucial to make teachers proficient enough to fulfill the educational needs of children with exceptional needs.

According to the Fundamental right of education, Article 21-A, it is the duty of the Government to make provisions for providing education to all the children between the ages of 6-14 years, which includes the children with special needs as well. To achieve the target of universalization of education, the Government has launched 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' which is functional since 2000-2001. In Chandigarh 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' has taken steps to facilitate education to meet the educational needs of children with special needs.

The steps taken by 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' for special need children in Chandigarh are as follows:

Approachability: To remove the obstacle of barring, 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' Chandigarh has initiated process to mainstream the children with special needs in the regular classrooms. The steps taken by SSA Chandigarh in this regard are as follows: i. Identification of children with special needs by the medical team of Government Hospital Sector 32 and 16. ii. These children should get admitted into the school within the 1, 3, 4 or 7 Kilometer of radius of their home. iii. Special assistive tools and medical equipments are given to the children with special needs with the help of NGOs and School Health Programme. iv. Transport allowance is provided to children with special needs. v. The children who cannot be mainstreamed into the regular classrooms due to their severity of disability were provided home based education.

Activities: To give equal education SSA Chandigarh has started skill training programme for children with special needs and world disability day is also celebrated to make people aware about the exceptional needs of such children.

Actions: To provide quality of education SSA Chandigarh has given emphasis on curriculum adaptations, individual educational plan, orientation and training to the teachers, support services and has provided assessment guidelines to the teachers⁷.

SSA Chandigarh has taken commendable steps to facilitate equal education to children with special needs but still teachers are finding it hard to provide quality of education to such children, so the present research paper emphasized on the actual problems experienced by the teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Model for inclusive teacher preparation: According to the model for inclusive teacher preparation, the present need is to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education. Pre-service teachers are required training regarding the varied needs of the children with special needs and should be exposed to inclusive education setting at earliest. Training in inclusive education setting makes the pre-service teachers comfortable, flexible and creative in the inclusive education. Pre-service teachers necessitate to be trained about collaborative teaching which emphasized on co-teaching, supportive learning, integrated curriculum and activities, joint evaluation and group skills. Teachers also require knowledge of different teaching techniques and strategies to accommodate the diverse needs of all the learners. Lastly pre-service teachers need to experience collaborative teaching and should observe and work in the inclusive settings⁸.

Review of Literature: Edward and Geraldina examined Teachers' Knowledge and Perceived Challenges of Teaching Children with Autism in Tanzanian Regular Primary Schools. The researchers interviewed sixteen teachers to collect the

qualitative data from three regular primary schools through purposive sampling technique. Findings of the study revealed that teachers contained low knowledge about autism; they do not get proper in-service training and orientations. The teachers stressed on collaboration among teachers, special educators, parents and proper training for them so that every autistic child can be benefitted through inclusive education⁹.

Gutuza R.F. and Mapolisa T. in their study titled "Challenges of Assessment of Students with Special Learning Needs" revealed that lack of diagnostic assessment of children with special needs led to improper assessment of such children and these children miss specific programmes including tests, examinations and curriculum. The researchers also found that the Zimbabwe policy guidelines failed to give clarity for assessment of such children¹⁰.

Bhatnagar N. and Das A. conducted a study on Regular School Teachers' Concerns and Perceived Barriers to Implement Inclusive Education in New Delhi, India. The data was collected from two focus groups which contained ten teachers in each group and twenty (20) individual teachers were interviewed by the researchers through semi-structured interview. The teachers expressed that large class size, lack of finances and poor infrastructure were the major barriers whereas some teachers stated that differentiation in instructions, lack of trained teachers and inclusive policy were their main concerned¹¹.

Udoba H.A. did a study on Challenges faced by teachers when teaching learners with developmental disability. The objectives of the study were to check the teachers' understanding of developmental disability, problems faced by them in the classroom, parents' collaboration with special education teachers and the teaching methods and techniques used by the teachers while teaching learners with developmental disability. The researcher found that teachers lack professional training to handle learners with developmental disability, there was shortage of special education teachers and the classrooms had poor learning environment. The teachers emphasized on reducing the class size, support from experts and collaboration between the parents and teachers¹².

Behlol M.G. conducted a study named "Inclusive Education: Preparation of Teachers, Challenges in Classroom and Future Prospects". The researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data through semi structured interview and check list. The researcher interviewed principals (6) and teachers (12) of different inclusive schools. Results of the study indicated that the teachers did not get any training on special education; infrastructure of the school did not satisfy the requirements of the special children and adaptations were needed to meet the needs of such children. The principals and teachers had mixed attitude i.e. positive as well as negative towards the children with special needs. The respondents suggested that Government should provide more financial assistance, proper training and equipments to teachers for the success of inclusive education¹³.

Chinombwe J. studied challenged faced by the teachers teaching the students with cerebral palsy. The data was collected from thirty teachers through structured open ended questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that teachers faced many challenges while teaching the students with cerebral palsy. The teachers said that they did not get any training to handle such children and Government did not motivate them and did not provide any special education allowance¹⁴.

A number of studies have been conducted to know the challenges faced by the teachers while teaching the children with special needs in the regular classrooms. These studies had shown that general teachers find it difficult to identify the special needs of such children and were not confident in teaching special children in inclusive education. The teachers highlighted that lack of training; insufficient knowledge and support from special educators and administration are the major reasons behind their incapability of teaching in inclusive education. But still there are many more worries among the teachers which needed to be highlighted so that their worries can be reduced by providing appropriate remedy. Hence, the researchers have taken up the present study in the light of steps taken by 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' Chandigarh. In this study the researchers tried to explore the actual worries faced by the teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Significance of the Study: As per the fundamental right of education (Right to Education, Article 21-A)¹⁵, no student can be denied admission in any regular school and needed to be admitted in age appropriate class. It's the responsibility of the teachers to provide education to all children without any discrimination in inclusive classrooms. It has become necessary for the teachers to make the classroom environment friendly for children with special needs and to educate them according to their needs and requirements. Generally teachers do not have any prior knowledge about the special education and they lack the abilities and the skills to teach children with special needs in the inclusive classroom. For the success of inclusive education it is necessary that all the teachers should have the skills and knowledge about exceptional needs of the special children. Thus, it is essential to know the real problems and worries of the

teachers about inclusive education in the regular classroom so that the remedial measures can be suggested to overcome it.

Objectives: i. To study the disquiet among male and female teachers towards inclusive education. ii. To suggest the ways to overcome the worries among the teachers towards inclusive education programme.

Delimitations: The present study was delimited to 200 teachers (100 males and 100 females) of 20 Government schools of Chandigarh (U.T.) only.

Methodology

Sample: The sample of 200 teachers from twenty (20) Government Schools of Chandigarh (U.T.) was selected randomly. Out of 200 teachers, 100 were male and 100 were female teachers. From each school ten (10) teachers (5 males and 5 females) were selected randomly.

Tool: Semi structured interview and participative observation technique was used to collect the data for the present study.

Data Collection: The teachers were told about the purpose of the study and were convinced to express their views as freely as possible. They were also told that their identity will be kept confidential and hence their interview was taken. The researchers observed the teachers in actual regular classrooms to collect the additional data for the study. Hence qualitative data was collected by the researchers.

Results and discussion

Table-1 shows the basic information about the sample of the study. Four age groups were considered for the present study i.e. 23-28 years, 29-34 years, 35-40 years and 41-46 years in which sixty (60) female teachers were in the age group of 35-46 years and forty (40) female teachers were in the age group of 23-34 years. Sixty four (64) male teachers belonged to the age group of 35-46 years whereas thirty six (36) male teachers were in the age group of 23-34 years.

Table-1: Basic information about the Sample.

Age	23-28 Years		29-34 Years		35-40 Years		41-46Years	
	M-15	F-23	M-21	F-17	M-35	F-43	M-29	F-17
Educational Qualification	JBT- 29 (14.5%)		B.Ed.- 100 (50%)		M.Ed.- 40 (20%)		Ph.D- 31 (15.5%)	
	M-12	F-17	M-48	F-52	M-22	F-18	M-18	F-13
Teaching Experience(years)	Less than 5 years (25%)		6-15 years (34%)		15-25 years (37%)		More than 25 years (4%)	
	M-23	F-27	M-35	F-33	M-39	F-35	M-3	F-5

Educational qualifications given in Table-1 reveals that out of the total sample of 200, twelve (6 percent) male and seventeen (8.5 percent) female teachers had done JBT, forty eight male (24 per cent) and fifty two (26 per cent) female teachers had done B.Ed., twenty two (11 per cent) male and eighteen (9 per cent) female teachers had done M.Ed. whereas only eighteen (9 per cent) male and thirteen (6.5 per cent) female teachers had done Ph.D.

Table-1 also indicates the teaching experience of the teachers. Twenty three (11.5 per cent) male and twenty seven (13.5 per cent) female teachers had less than five years of teaching experience, thirty five (17.5 per cent) male and thirty three (16.5 per cent) female teachers had teaching experience between 6-15 years, thirty nine (19.5 per cent) male and thirty five (17.5 per cent) female teachers had teaching experience between 15-25 years and only three (1.5 per cent) and five (2.5 per cent) female teachers had teaching experience more than 25 years.

Thus the Table-1 revealed that more number of teachers i.e. 78 were in the age group of 35-40, 50% teachers had educational qualification of B.Ed. and maximum number of teachers i.e. 74 had teaching experience between 15-25 years.

Table-2: Worries expressed by the Teachers of Government Schools, Chandigarh (U.T.).

Worries	Females-100	Males-100
Unable to give individual attention	100 %	100 %
Behaviour of the intellectually disabled children is a cause of worry	78 %	67 %
Insufficient in-service training and orientations	83 %	77 %
Lack of assistive tools and study material	100 %	100 %
Not feasible to make individual educational plan	100 %	100 %
Skill training programme accessible only to few children with special needs	85 %	79 %
Lack of support services	87 %	77 %
No proper adaptations	100 %	100 %
Library not functional	89 %	85 %
Problem in assessment	100 %	100 %
Excessive administrative work	68 %	72 %
Loss of the child	100 %	100 %

Table-2 shows the worries expressed by the Government school teachers of Chandigarh (U.T.).

Discussion: After observing the views expressed by the teachers, the current worries among the teachers of Government schools of Chandigarh (U.T.) are discussed below:

Individual attention: Hundred per cent teachers said that in Government schools, class size is very large, due to which they cannot give individual attention to the children with special needs. They expressed their helplessness for not being able to attend such children individually.

Behaviour of the intellectually disabled children: More than seventy five per cent female teachers i.e. 78 and more than sixty per cent male teachers i.e. 67 said that the behaviour of intellectually disabled children is a cause of worry as sometimes they become very aggressive and it become difficult for them to handle the situation. Some teachers i.e. 53 female and 49 male teachers even said that when these children become aggressive they at times hurt the other children as well as the teachers.

In service training and orientations: Majority of the female and male teachers i.e. 78 per cent said that though the administration arranges in-service training and orientations programmes for them but they were not sufficient. They said that these training programmes basically focused on theoretical knowledge and did not provide any practical information about the children with special needs. Moreover they revealed that they were not able to retain the theoretical knowledge because of its technical nature.

Assistive devices and study material: All the female and male teachers said that assistive devices and study material for the children with special needs were provided by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Chandigarh (U.T.) but these devices and study material often reached late in the schools which resulted in delay in the educational process of special children.

Individual educational plan: All the teachers expressed that it was difficult for them to indentify the different needs of the diverse special children. They also said that if two children were diagnosed with the same disability still their needs were different. It was revealed by the teachers that it was very difficult for them to prepare individual educational plan for each child.

Skill training programme: As per the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Chandigarh skill training programmes were arranged for the children with special needs but more than two-third female and male teachers said only few students get training in these programmes in actual. They emphasized the need to provide skill training to each special child as it will enhance their abilities and capacities.

Support services: Support from resource teacher, parents, counselor and administration is essential for teachers for the success of inclusive education. Eighty seven (87) female and seventy seven (77) male teachers said resource teacher visited the school twice a week but usually they get busy in completing

the paper work and they get very less time to interact with the resource teacher to discuss their problems regarding children with special needs. The observations made by the researchers support this point of teachers. The teachers expressed that most of the parents did not cooperate with them. The teachers also said that there was an urgent need for a counselor in schools to provide timely guidance to them as well as to the children.

Adaptations: Modifications and adaptations are necessary to facilitate learning to the children with special needs. All the female and male teachers agreed that there is a dearth of adaptations in Government schools. They said that they tried to adapt the teaching methodology on their own level but there was lack of proper teaching aids, technology and materials. They also highlighted that school infrastructure is not updated according to the needs of the special children. The observation made by the researchers showed that in some schools there were not proper rooms for students they use to sit on floor and study, in some schools ramps were not made and separate washrooms were not available for children with special needs.

Library: Eighty nine (89) female and eighty five (85) male teachers said that library in their schools was not functional as there was no librarian in schools. They said the library did not contain sufficient books on children with special needs. There was also no reference book for them which could guide them about the diverse needs of the children. All the JBT teachers said that they even could not access to the library as they need to sit in their respective classes throughout the day.

Assessment: All the teachers agreed that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Chandigarh has provided them guidelines for the assessment of the children with special needs but as the needs of each individual child are different, it was difficult for them to assess them.

Excessive administrative work: Sixty eight female and seventy two male teachers said that they were indulged in administrative work from time to time. They said they were assigned different duties during elections and had to go for surveys during teaching hours which affected their teaching job adversely.

Loss of the child: Male and female teachers expressed their worry that it is the loss of special children who were admitted in inclusive schools as the schools are not ready according to their needs. They also said that these students even feel isolated in the classrooms as sometimes other children make fun of them.

Recommendations given by the Teachers: The following recommendations were given by the teachers to overcome their worries for inclusive education:

Improve the teacher-student ratio: Majority of the teachers' i.e. 87 per cent said it is the need of the hour to reduce the class size and to improve the teacher-student ratio, so that they can pay individual attention to the children with special needs. They also

said that once the teacher-student ratio will become better they will be able to make individual educational plan for the children and will be able to assess them with the help of resource teacher.

Regular training: 95 per cent teachers said that they need regular training for inclusive education at regular time intervals. But the teachers emphasized that the training should cover more practical aspects and less theoretical.

Basic skill training to children with special needs: All the teachers stressed on the need of basic skill training to children with special needs before admitting them into the inclusive schools. They said basic skill training should include communication, sitting, eating and toilet training.

Support services, study material and tools: 99 per cent teachers said they are in urgent need for assistance from the special educators and need assistive tools for children with special needs. They stressed that the study material for children with special needs should be available to them before the start of new session. They highlighted that the special educators should discuss with them about the special children so that timely intervention can be given to them. They also pointed out that special educators should pay more attention towards the special children rather than completing the paper work. Teachers urged that counselor should be appointed in each school and counseling of the parents of special children should be done from time to time, to make them aware about the needs of special children.

Library: Two third teachers highlighted the need of appointment of librarian in the schools so that they can access the library in time of need and said that new books according to the needs and requirements of teachers and children should be added regularly. The JBT teachers stressed they should also get time to visit library so that they can get knowledge about different needs of special children through books.

Adaptations: All the adaptations whether they are curricular or co-curricular are needed in the schools. 100 per cent teachers stressed that infrastructural facilities and all the adaptations for children with special needs should be provided immediately.

Recruitment of more staff and support staff: 89 per cent teachers emphasized that the administration need to recruit more teaching and support staff for the success of inclusive education programme.

Special education as integral part of B.Ed. syllabus: 91 per cent teachers suggested that special education should be included in B.Ed. syllabus as integral part so that the pupil teachers can get knowledge about children with special needs during their B.Ed only. They also suggested that during their teaching practice the pupil teachers should interact with the children with special needs and try to understand their diverse needs. This kind of training will help them to handle such children in future as well.

Help from volunteers: 65 per cent teachers recommended that help from volunteers who have knowledge of children with special needs or are working in the field of inclusive education can be taken to assist the general teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Wise distribution of administrative work: 83 per cent teachers urged that administrative work should be assigned to them wisely, so that they can pay more attention towards teaching.

Conclusion

The study showed that teachers of Government schools are facing many problems related to the children with special needs i.e. large class size, behaviour problems, lack of special educators and support staff, insufficient trainings and orientations etc. They suggested measures to overcome these problems as well. As the accountability of teaching lies on the shoulders on the teachers it is necessary to pay attention towards the problems they are suffering in the inclusive classrooms and need to be solved at the earliest.

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