

Inclusive Education and Teacher Education Programme in India: A Review

Dr. Lajmeet Kaur¹, Dr. Preetee Pandey²

¹ Principal & Head, B.Ed. Department, Apex College of Education and Technology, Bilaspur (U.P.) India.

² Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Psychology, Gokul Das Girls P.G. College, Moradabad (U.P.) India.

ABSTRACT

In Indian conditions the role of education is to transform a static society in to vibrant one with a commitment to development and change. It has been rightly said that an important ingredient of this metamorphosis is the emergence of a learning society in which people of all ages and all of sections not only have access to education but are involved in the process of continuing education. With this view so that all sections particularly the children with special needs. The role of generalist teacher is now affirmed as being an important component in the success or otherwise of inclusive education practice issues about the effectiveness of teacher preparation for working in inclusive classrooms have arisen. An evaluation of pre service teacher's perceptions regarding their preparedness for inclusion had some interesting findings. It has been found that increasing knowledge about legislation and policy related to inclusion and improving levels of confidence in becoming inclusive teachers did not likewise address their concerns or perceived stress about having students with disabilities in their class. As universities re-evaluate their teacher preparation courses, a range of pertinent issues are identified that require consideration. With the complex and heterogeneous educational environment the challenges faced by the teaching profession are increasing day by day. Teachers need to have not only theoretical and practical knowledge but also the capacity to bring about optimal levels of learning for all students. In India the number of Disabled people is so large, their problem so complex, available resources so scarce and social attitudes so damaging, it is only legislation which can eventually bring about substantial change in a uniform manner. The main objectives of this study is to analyse how teacher education programmes prepares their teacher educators candidates for inclusive education classrooms for the students with special needs. Present study based on secondary data sources and reviews of previous researches.

Keywords- Inclusive Classrooms, Children with special needs, Attitudes

I INTRODUCTION

The issue of educational integration or inclusion has been the focus of much debate over the past several years. Some studies however focused on how inclusion into the educational main stream influences the development of a positive self identity effects the level of aspiration and achievement motivation among students with disabilities. Although the goal of inclusion is to create a community in which all children work and learn together and develop mutually. In India as elsewhere, classroom teachers are increasingly faced with the challenge of teaching learners whose differences vary across many dimensions. Schools often exclude, refuse to include certain students on the ground that teachers do not have the requisite knowledge and skills to teach. This sense of being unqualified or not prepared to teach all students in inclusive classrooms raises questions about what constitutes necessary knowledge and skills, and different views about what classroom teachers need to know and how they might be prepared to work in inclusive classrooms. Inclusive education has been internationally recognised as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and quality education for all children especially those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability, gender or other characteristics. The UN Convention on Rights of persons with disabilities (2006) makes explicit reference to the importance of ensuring inclusive systems of education.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

In India, the issue of education of children with disabilities remains imperceptible, hidden from the public domain, a private problem for families and NGOs to deal with. It's time that the government agencies as well as mainstream institution woke up to reality that 'segregation' of children with challenging needs is morally unjustifiable and a violation of human rights. Indeed there is no other way to provide education to 27 million disabled children when seventy eight percent of Indian population lives in rural areas without provision for special schools. Therefore, inclusive schools have to address the needs of all children in every community and the central and state governments have to train their teachers to manage inclusive classroom. The study aims to prepare mainstream classroom teachers for inclusive education starts from the premise that the question is not what teachers need to know or whether they have necessary knowledge and skills to teach in inclusive classrooms, but how to make best use of what they already know when learners experience difficulty. The Right to Education (2009) RTE Act has made education of all children mandatory. Inclusive education is the keyword which ensures that all children should learn together. The 'Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is an extension of Universal Elementary Education focussed on 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to secondary stage. Inclusive education is at the core of both programs. The National Action plan for inclusive Education of children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) Developed by ministry of

Human Resource Development (MHRD) envisages their access and participation in all general educational settings from early child education, through schools to higher education. The goal of action plan is "To ensure the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in all available general educational settings by providing them with a learning environment that is available, accessible, affordable and appropriate." The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) on school education provides guidelines for making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and non cognitive areas.

Pre-service refers to training individuals before they become teacher. This includes training at teacher training colleges and universities at both national and provincial levels. Teacher education has to embrace inclusive education in order to accommodate the learning environment and curriculum that meet the needs of all learners. As stated Florian and Rouse (2009) "The task of initial teacher education is to prepare people to enter a profession which accepts individual and collective responsibility for improving the learning and participation of all children. The most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes are knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers. Teachers who have undergone 'teacher training programmes' should be competent to teach learners with and without disabilities in the same classroom environment. Teacher development is at the heart of initiatives for inclusive practices in the schools (Ainscow, 2003) though regular classroom teachers are willing to take responsibility of all children, including those with special needs, they will not be confident if they are not equipped with necessary skills. In India for pre service training NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education, a statutory body of central government, is responsible for planning and coordinating development of teacher education in the country. For in service training the country has a large network of teacher training institutions (TTT's) which provide in service training to school teachers. In India, the Bachelor of Education programme is a professional course that prepares teacher for primary, upper primary, middle, secondary and senior secondary level. The duration of this course has been increased by NCTE from 2015 onwards to 2 years, besides modifying the curriculum. Teacher preparation for inclusion is significant as various researchers (Forlin Loreman, Sharma and Earle 2009; Winter and Mazureck, 2011) have found that the general classroom teacher has a profound impact on the success of inclusive education. In the general teacher education there is an optional special needs paper to train and prepare teachers to identify and diagnose disability. However it is not an integral part of the training and it does not train teachers to deal with diversity or challenge negative attitudes (Singal, 2005a). This reinforces the difference of children with disabilities who, some believe, can only be

taught by teachers qualified specially for them (Singal, 2005a). Winter (2006) and Reid (2010) point out that many new teachers express apprehension about their ability to teach learner with special needs in mainstream classes and lament that their preparation for inclusive class was inadequate. Hodkinson (2006) as he concludes that first year teachers felt their pre service training provided them with a good understanding of the theory of inclusive education however their understanding of practical delivery was limited. Pre service teachers showed the need for more preparation and experience in order to feel prepared for working with students with SEN Odunavar, Vijetha and Devaraj (2014) investigated teacher educator's attitudes, concerns, and also their practices about 'Inclusive Education' in their respective B.Ed., D.Ed. and Nursery teacher training centres in Mysore. The results implied that even through teacher educators are inclined towards inclusive education they expressed their apprehensions about their own teachers trainees gaining fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education as an integral part of their curricula as it is not a compulsory subject. Keeping in view the objective of New Education Policy (2016) to ensure inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, it is the need of the hour to study/review the existing 2 years B.Ed. regular programme related to inclusive education.

III OBJECTIVES AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

(a) Objectives

From the above discussion the main objectives of the study are following:

- (i) To analyse that how teacher education programmes prepares their teacher educators candidates for inclusive classrooms.
 - (ii) To examine that existing course, syllabus and curriculum framework of study specially two years B.Ed. programme and its usefulness of teachers as well as the special students.
 - (iii) To study to see the uniformity of the syllabus running in the major north Indian universities.
- (b) This study is a descriptive in nature and based on secondary data sources and reviews of earlier researches related to inclusive class rooms and education.

IV FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the above it can be said that practical work related to inclusive education has been included in the curriculum but some significant insights concerning the direction, scope and quality of curriculum which has been undertaken in various universities situated in North India are set below :-

- (a) Inclusive education in some universities is not a compulsory subject. However, it should be a compulsory subject for all teacher candidates and an integral part of teacher training curriculum. Fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education such as understanding needs and abilities of children with special needs and pedagogy skills such as instructional accommodation and activity differentiation, the use of appropriate, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support learners with disabilities not included comprehensively.
- (b) No specific guidelines related to practical work/activities have been given. In addition, no marks have been allotted to the practical work done by students both in external as well as internal part. Teacher education programmes need to consider practical placements in schools and classrooms where inclusion has been embraced as a philosophy.
- (c) Pre service teachers often have limited exposure to and practice with children with special needs. As per the curriculum, the candidates are required to go through a school internship for an average 16 weeks opportunities and direct contact with special needs are missing placement of pre service teachers in special or integrated schools is rarely given consideration. A review conducted by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) concluded that although most teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusion, teachers did not feel prepared for teaching students with exceptional needs.
- (d) The majority of school personal in India are not trained to design and implement educational programme for students with disabilities in regular school (Myreddi and Narayan, 2000).
- (e) The B.Ed. curriculum is not adequate to cover all components of inclusive education eg. in Punjabi University, Categories of children with special needs in regular classrooms has not been included in the curriculum. In Banaras Hindu University only children with physical disability have been included other categories i.e. visually impaired, hearing impaired, intellectually disabled, learning disabled have not been included. The teacher training course curriculum of general pre service training programmes neither fully provides knowledge to the trainees about different categories/needs of special children nor does it equip them to manage the mild and moderately disabled children in general classrooms.

V CONCLUDING REMARKS: A WAY FORWARD

In Indian conditions the role of education is to transform a static society in to vibrant one with a commitment to development and change. It has been rightly said that an important ingredient of this metamorphosis is the emergence of a learning society in which people of all ages and all of sections not only have access to education but are involved in the process of continuing education. With this view so that all sections particularly the children with special needs. Teacher's abilities and attitudes is a major limitation for inclusive education. The training of the staff at all levels is often not adequate. Greater focus on teacher's education and compulsory modules on teaching, assessing and guiding students related to inclusive classrooms is required. The emphasis of the B.Ed. curriculum is more on theory of inclusive education with half credit paper, thus making the teaching incomplete and inadequate. There is a need to strengthen and modify the existing B.Ed. curriculum of inclusive education focusing on practical fact. The country faces a shortage of qualified teachers. There is lack of capacity building in existing institutions and absence of a strategic competency framework that can help the teacher educator to develop competencies to prepare candidates for inclusive classrooms. In this context, it is recommended that the ongoing in service training programmes and preparation of teachers at pre service level need to be strengthened.

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Appendix
Curriculum of Inclusive Education in North Indian Universities

S.N.	University	Title of the Paper	Year/ Semester	Marks Allotted	Practical
1	Panjab University (Chandigarh)	Creating An Inclusive School	IV Sem.	Total marks -50 External -40 Internal – 10	Yes
2	Punjabi University (Punjab)	Inclusive School	IV Sem.	Total marks -50 External -35 Internal – 15	Yes
3	Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar (Punjab)	Inclusive Education	IV Sem.	Total marks -50 External -35 Internal – 15	Yes
4	Kurushetra University (Haryana)	Creating an Inclusive School	IV Sem.	Total marks -50 External -40 Internal – 10	Yes
5	Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak (Haryana)	Creating an Inclusive School	II Year	Total marks -100 (Year 2) Theory -80 Internal – 10	Yes
6	Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)	Elective Education for Inclusive Society	II Year	Marks -100 (70+30) Theory (External) 70 Test and Assignment Marks (Internal) 30	No
7	Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, (Uttarakhand)	Creating an Inclusive School	IV Sem.	Total Marks : 100 (Year 2) Theory 70 Internal 30	No
8	University of Rajasthan (Rajasthan)	Creating an Inclusive School	Part 2	Total Marks 50 Internal 15 External 35	Yes **
9	MJP Rohilkhand University, Bareilly	Creating an Inclusive School	II Year	Total marks -50 External -40 Internal – 10	No

Source: websites of concerning universities.