

AN EVALUATION OF TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE INDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the teacher's training program for inclusive education in the context of the Indian schooling system. Substantiating the content with current research work and previous studies that have been conducted on teachers training programs and inclusive education in India, this research paper made an attempt to highlight the key challenges in teachers training curricula in India against the successful implementation of inclusive education in the Indian public schools. The paper proposed a few suggestions to improve the teachers training program with focus on inclusive education.

Key words: Inclusive Education, Sarva Sikhsha Aviyan, Special Needs, Pre-service Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education (IE) is an idea where all students are incorporated within the school setting and participate in learning activities without the risk of exclusion irrespective of their gender, special needs, ethnicity, culture, and social backgrounds. The broad definition of inclusion concerns all students and marginalized groups, not only those with disabilities Thomas (2013). According to the Department of Education in India, the concept of inclusive education in the Indian context can be identified since the country got independence in 1947. The first deaf school of India was established in Mumbai in 1883 and a blind school in Amritsar in 1887, respectively (Department of Education, 2000). In the Indian context it has been noticed that educators have faced significant difficulties in implementation of inclusive education in schools. Keeping this in view, the paper discusses the challenges of inclusive education in India, adequateness of teachers training for implementing inclusive education in the Indian public schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has been conducted through qualitative research techniques such as literature review and analysis of Indian teacher training curriculum- Bachelor of Education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To review the challenges of inclusive education in India from the teacher-training perspective in public schools.
- To explore a few possible options on how inclusive education can be carried out efficiently in the classroom setting with enhanced teachers training programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive Education can be defined as a setting where all children can learn together irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, religion, gender, race, and individual learning needs. Schools have progressed towards the inclusive teaching approach to support students learning needs, therefore, examining teachers training program practices has become vital to review the successful implementation of inclusivity in the classrooms. Previous and present research studies have indicated that there has been inadequate teachers training programs in inclusive education, which has led to unsuccessful or limited efficiency in creating an inclusive educational setting in the Indian public schools. Sharma (1993) conducted a study on "A Study of certain factors related to the learning disabilities among Primary School children, Disabilities and impairments." The article attempted to examine the effectiveness of the intervention programs which were developed by the Sarva Sikha Aviyan for the parents and teachers to cater to the learning needs of the children with learning disabilities. The study concluded that the primary concern was the lack of correlation between the attitude and awareness of the key stakeholders such as principals, teachers, and parents on the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Another similar study was led by Sharma (2001) on "The attitudes and concerns of school principals and teachers regarding the integration of students with disabilities into regular schools in Uttar Pradesh, India". The article examined 310 primary school principals and 484 public school teachers in Uttar Pradesh. The research highlighted that the principals and the teachers major concern was inadequate training for the teaching staff and a deficient supply of resources to implement inclusive education.

Bhatnagar, N. (2006) conducted a research "Attitudes and concerns of Indian teachers towards integrated education". The study focuses on the lack of a well-planned, integrated teachers training program to implement inclusive strategies within the classroom setting in India. According to the study, despite teachers having a mindset to incorporate inclusive education in their classrooms, teachers are predominantly speculative about their capabilities of delivering appropriate inclusive strategies in a classroom. The research also highlights that the teachers are dubious about the extent of help in terms of resources they might receive from the school for practicing inclusive strategies successfully.

Another study has sighted that teachers in India are not receiving appropriate training in special education delivery methods. As per the study conducted by Das (2001) on "Perceived training needs of regular primary and secondary school teachers to implement inclusive education programs in Uttar Pradesh, India." One of the hardest challenges of imparting inclusive education in India is the shortfall of trained workforce. The study had surveyed schools teachers in Uttar Pradesh - 223 primary

and 130 secondary teachers. The result indicated that 70% of teachers did not have any training on teaching students with disabilities or the teachers had very limited training in special education.

Similar concerns have been raised globally regarding the low competency of the teachers due to lack of training in inclusive education. According to the data provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (2013) had indicated that a notable number of teachers globally have not received training for inclusivity in classrooms during their teacher-training programs. As an example of scarce preparedness of teachers during the teachers training program in the United Arab Emirates, Gaad and Khan (2007) and Alghazo and Gaad (2004) mentioned that the generally teachers prefer a separate classroom arrangement for students with special needs than an inclusive classroom due to lack of training in inclusive education and due to lack of resources in the school such as teaching assistants and other tools to cater to different learning needs of the students. In the Canadian context, Loreman (2010) studied that in Alberta teachers' concerns regarding inclusive education have not been addressed during the teachers training. Loreman (2010) has suggested that the idea of inclusive education- intervention methods, differentiated instructional delivery and assessment structure, and attitudes of the special needs students and their parents must be studied and trained to successfully implement an inclusive environment in the classrooms.

In conclusion it can be understood that while inclusion as an idea has been welcomed and accepted across countries, the successful implementation of the inclusive strategies has remained a challenge. In India, the teacher training programs require more robust training in all aspects of inclusive education- teaching techniques, understanding learning disabilities, following protocols for individual and special needs students, and extending the inclusive setting in out of school activities like playtime and community outreach programs.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The study utilized a qualitative approach through content analysis of two research articles- "Rethinking Teacher Education Programs for Inclusive Classrooms: Issues and Challenges in India" by Pushpa Kumari, Rajiv Nayan, S. P Aggarwal, and Geetanjali Baswani- The research paper studied the Teachers Training Program- Bachelors in Education of a few sampled Indian Universities, which have been examined in context to pre-service and in-service teachers training across the Indian public school sector.

The second research article which was considered in this study - "A century of teacher education in India- 1883-1985" by Aarti Mangal examined the progress, reforms and concerns of the teachers training program since 1883 till 1985.

Findings from both the research articles have been evaluated and an attempt has been made to highlight the major concerns regarding the inadequate training curriculum in the Indian context. A few recommendations have been proposed as possible solutions to reform the Bachelors in Education training program in India.

Re-evaluation of the Indian Teachers Training Curriculum (B.Ed Program)

- **Bachelor of Education - Curriculum Review**

In the Indian context, the challenges for the successful implementation of inclusive education plans are many. For instance, the Ministry of Education exercises limited official duties or operational authority over the education of disabled students. A country which is set mostly in traditional values, attitudes of the parents and teachers towards special needs children in a classroom setting are also a concern. However, the vital question that arises is about preparedness of the teachers to handle special needs children in a mainstream class. Data analysis of this paper is based on the research conducted by Kumari et al. (2019) on the teacher training curriculum of various Indian Universities- Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Kolkata, Gujrat, Jammu and Kashmir. The research critiqued the Year 2 of the Bachelor of Educations curriculum structure, subjects taught, marks assigned to the activities and teaching practices in an inclusive setting. The research highlighted that at a few Universities did not allocate any marks for the practical components of the inclusive teaching practices. Kumari et al. (2019) stated that the B.Ed. curriculum at the Universities mentioned in the research required the trainee teachers to attend school placements on an average of 16 weeks; 2 weeks during semester 2 and in semester 1 and 14 weeks in semester 3. Therefore, the pre-service teachers (before the school placements took place) got very limited exposure to an inclusive classroom setting. Except Jammu and Kashmir University, all the Universities in India teach Inclusive Education as a subject during Year 2 of the course leaving the pre-service teachers with very slight chance of understanding the practical aspect of inclusive education.

- ***Inclusive Education as a subject***

The theory of Inclusive Education has long since been adopted in the Indian educational scenario, however, necessary practical skills are not incorporated in the curriculum adequately. The research also pointed out that the subject of Inclusive Education was not a compulsory subject in a few Universities. According to the NCTE (2009), Indian pre-service teachers training curriculum is predominantly theoretical and has less emphasis on the practical teaching components.

- ***Excluding Teachers Training from the mainstream University Education***

In India teachers training courses are delivered separately from the mainstream University courses. The segregation of the teachers training program from the main University building creates a divide between the teachers in training from other students. Mangal, A. (2020) studied that the teachers training programs get very scarce support from the other University departments. The consequences of separation from the

main University building and distance teaching programs are many. Teacher training programs lack the integration of IT skills, holistic development, and day to day life skills, which otherwise the mainstream University students enjoy. Goel DR, and Goel, Chhaya (2012) studied that the present teachers curriculum in India lacks the quintessential social management skills.

SUGGESTIONS

- India is a country of paradoxes. The reforms in the teachers training program must cater to different geographical contexts of the schools. For example, the training for inclusive education must consider the geographical setting of the schools- rural, urban, semi-urban, semi-rural. As the objective of inclusive education is to integrate the special needs or disabled students within their environment, such contextual training is required to customize the students learning needs in a classroom setting.
- Increase the practical components or the in-class and on the job training activities during the first semester of the education. Teachers must gain hands-on knowledge on handling special needs students from the beginning of their training. Teachers are required to equip themselves on differentiated techniques of classroom teaching through practical components during their course.
- Experts in the field of special education or disability support workers must be collaborated to form an integrated curriculum with constructive feedback on the practical components of the on-the-job training. Also, the training program must contain a structured marking system for the training on inclusive education, which is missing from many Universities in India.
- It is vital to understand the idea of inclusivity and the concept of special needs in a classroom setting. Therefore, teachers are required to be trained with skills like CPR, utilising assistive devices et al. to handle children with physical disability as well as with holistic training techniques such as one on one counselling and other applied linguistic teaching techniques to address the students with behavioral issues and learning disabilities.
- Integration in the mainframe University structure/building. Majority of the teacher training programs are delivered at a separate College or a building severing all physical ties to the main University and its facilities. It is extremely important to initiate the inclusivity of the teacher training students in the University events, workshops, and community life for better development of social skills amongst the future teachers.

CONCLUSION

The review of the literature and the content analysis has emphasized that the teachers training curriculum in India must be revised to incorporate the growing demand of inclusive education in the country. More research should be conducted on specific areas of inclusive education to make the teachers training program more standardized in the global education setting. As per the findings of the research papers, it was concluded that the pre-service teachers require increased classroom training in special education and for children with disabilities. Therefore, Teacher training curricula must be more inclusion-driven focusing on all school levels- primary, middle, and secondary.

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