

ATTITUDE OF THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Research findings from across the globe indicate that as more and more students from diverse backgrounds populate 21st century classrooms, schools and teachers are struggling to respond to wide array of students. Diversified classrooms need intense efforts on the part of the teachers to respond to the growing individual differences among the student population. In this regard, the study was conducted to analyze the role and relevance of pre service teacher education programmes for inclusive education. A sample of 500 student teachers, pursuing Elementary Teacher Education Programme (Final year) from the DIETs in Delhi, was chosen by the way of Incidental sampling. The data was collected on a 5 point Likert scale. The results were used to suggest interventions for the teacher education programmes.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education (IE), Elementary Teacher Education, Pre Service Teacher Education Programmes*



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I. Introduction

Inclusive education has been a much researched topic that has been posing a number of challenges for policy-making and implementation processes. Conceptualizations of inclusive education varies from narrower views viz. ‘the attempt to educate persons with disabilities by integrating them as closely as possible into the regular structures of the educational system’ to broader connotations as a ‘guiding principle helping to accomplish quality Education for All (EFA)’. Studies have indicated that the student’s performance is not completely the result of their work; it is affected by many factors and the first one is the attitude of the teacher. A positive attitude from the teacher affects the student’s motivation, attitude towards school and school work, the student’s self confidence and as a result personality development. The study findings show teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion depend strongly on their education, experience with learners having special educational needs and the availability of support (Benigno et al, 2007). In this regard the study attempted to explore the attitude of the pre service teachers towards inclusive education.

II. Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to analyze the role and relevance of pre service teacher education programmes in response to the need of inclusive education. The study attempted to analyze the attitude and beliefs of the student teachers pursuing diploma in elementary teacher education in the state of Delhi. It also attempted to differentiate between the attitude & beliefs of the student teachers on the basis of gender

III. Research Design

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 500 student teachers, pursuing Diploma in Elementary Education (Final Year) from D.I.E.T.s in Delhi. Amongst the 500 student teachers, 250 were selected from the government D.I.E.T.s and the rest were selected from the self financing institutes in Delhi undertaking the Diploma Programme. All the sample units were selected by the way of incidental sampling.

Tools Used

A self prepared 5 point Likert Scale was used by the researcher to analyse the attitudes and beliefs of the student teachers on inclusive education. The scale consisted of 35 questions in all based on the “*Profile of Inclusive Teachers developed by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education*” in 2011. The questions in the scale were categorized into 4 categories namely Valuing Learner Diversity; Supporting all Learners; Working with others & Personal Professional Development. Each item were set against five responses i.e. “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Can’t Say”, “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”. The statements were scored as 0,1,2,3 and 4 for the positive statements and the scoring was reversed for the negative statements. In this way all the items in the scale were scored. The maximum score for this scale was 140 and the minimum score was 0. Those who obtained the score up-to 31% were said to have an unfavourable attitude towards Inclusive Education, those who score above 31% up to 74% were said to have a neutral attitude towards Inclusive Education and those who score above 74% were said to have a favourable attitude towards Inclusive Education. The reliability of this scale by split-half technique is found to be 0.61. Validity of the content was ensured by the Expert advice. Thus the scale constructed was valid and reliable.

Analysis of the data

The individual score for each student teacher was calculated. Mean and Standard deviation was calculated. Based on the mean \pm 1 SD the level of attitude of teacher trainees was calculated. The results obtained are discussed in the tables below.

Table 1: The Levels Of Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Of The Entire Sample

Sample size (N)	Attitude Levels		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
500	58 (0.75%)	373 (22%)	69 (77.25%)

Table 2: The Mean And The Standard Deviation Of The Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Scores Of The Entire Sample

Sample size (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation	M+ 1SD	M-1SD
500	102.8	13.28	116.08	89.52

IV. Findings of the Study

The following are the important findings of the present investigation which were inferred from the Tables

1. Majority of the student teachers show a neutral attitude towards inclusive education.
2. Amongst those having the positive attitude towards inclusive education 82% approx were the female student teachers whereas this percentage stood at 50% in case of the negative attitude.
3. With respect to each of the individual statement in the scale, the student teachers were found to have a neutral attitude in almost all the statements. Most of the statements were found to have negative or neutral attitudes with a very small percentage of the positive ones.

V. Conclusion

The present investigation revealed that majority of the student teachers of DIETs show a neutral attitude towards inclusive education which is not very desirable in light of the current policy interventions such as Right to Education, 2010 in India. This seems to be a point of concern as having a neutral attitude does not only mean no negative inclinations rather it also means the absence of the positive ones. Thus, something seems to be missing as the attitude of the student teachers is yet not positive towards practicing inclusion.

Attitudes, beliefs, skills and knowledge are an important part of teacher education (Beacham and Rouse, 2012). The finding of the research indicate that many student teachers have not formed clear opinions about inclusive teaching though initial teacher education is the stage that provides an opportunity for influencing attitudes through provision of a carefully designed learning programme. The finding are also supported by the findings of Beacham & Rouse (2012) who clearly state that the teacher education courses have failed to influence the attitude of the student teachers .Thus, neither the curriculum nor the curriculum transaction is bringing the desired levels of changes in the attitude of the student teachers which seem to be critical for the implementation of inclusive education.

VI. References

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Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Prof Pranati Panda, Professor, National University of Educational Planning Administration without whose generous and stimulating guidance the study could not have been completed.