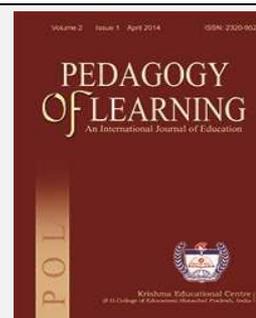


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Awareness of Elementary School Teachers about Inclusive Education

Sanjeevani Sudha Jena

Research Scholar, Department of Education and Education Technology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

Sudarshan Mishra

Head, Department of Education, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha, India

Corresponding Author: **Sanjeevani Sudha Jena**

E-mail: sanjeevani.sudha2013@gmail.com

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Abstract

The present research is aimed at studying the awareness level of elementary school teachers about inclusive education and to study whether there exists any difference in the awareness level of elementary school teachers about inclusive education with respect to their gender, locality, teaching experience, educational qualification and age. Descriptive survey design was employed in carrying out the study. Random sampling technique was used for collecting data from 100 elementary school teachers of Bhadrak and Cuttack districts of Odisha. The data collected through awareness test were analyzed by using quantitative techniques. It is revealed that no significant difference exists in awareness level of elementary school teachers about inclusive education with regard to gender, locality, professional qualification and age. However, with regard to experience, significant difference was found between more experienced and less experienced teachers about the concept of inclusive education whereas, no significant difference was found between more experienced and less experienced teachers in legal provisions of inclusive education, basic information about children with special needs and skill and competencies required for inclusive education. Implications and suggestions for further studies were given on the basis of the findings of the present study.

Keywords: Awareness, Elementary School Teachers, Inclusive Education

INTRODUCTION

India has the second largest education system in the world, with 200 million children aged between 6 and 14. There are an estimated of 25 million children out of school in India (MHRD, 2003 statistics, cited in World Bank, 2004), many of whom are marginalised by poverty, gender, disability, and caste. While many educational programmes have attempted to reach out to these previously excluded children, those with disabilities are often forgotten, emphasising their invisible status in a rigidly categorised society (Lindsay, 2007). The number of people with disabilities in the country is 26 million or approximately 2.1% of the total population according to official estimates from the census of India (Government of India, 2011). The Government of India has undertaken a series of initiatives to provide education to differently abled children and also to provide education to the under privileged section of our society for inclusive growth of the society. Education is the most powerful key for social change, and often initiates progressive movement in the social structure. There by like education for all, inclusive education is the important consideration for ensuring the right of every child by welcoming all child to participate in school and recognize and responds to every student irrespective of any religion, caste, language and physical deformity and as a result teacher are expected to support these diverse needs which is a very demanding and challenging task in now a days. Therefore, the idea of inclusive education has a high relevancy for our current condition where diversity in religion, faith, caste, gender, ethnicity and ability are often seen as the labelling threat rather than a source of richness and diversity. Inclusive education stands for improvement or modification of the structure of education system in all dimensions to address and welcome the varied educational needs of children. It is the role of each and every member of education system to aware and understands the concept of inclusive education properly and implements it to build a inclusive society. The success of inclusive education programme depends on a number of variables. Among the variables perhaps more important variable is the teacher whose work has undergone a tremendous change since the implementation of inclusive education program in India as reported by Das, Sharma & Singh, 2012. So, it is the foremost duty of the teacher to address the need of the learners who are being excluded from mainstream system and accordingly create a welcoming environment for accommodating all children in access as well as in success.

The educationists across India have felt that there is a need to make teachers aware about inclusive education (Pingle& Garg, 2015). In India school at all the levels need to promote an education system that brings all learners onto a common platform. The curriculum needs to balance what is common for all and at the same time take into account the individual needs of all the learners. The biggest challenge to inclusion of children with special needs is lack of awareness in school authorities and teachers in India (Sen,2007 cited in Pingle& Garg,2015). Viswanathan asserts that “Besides lack of resources and infrastructure, the current education system does not allow for individual development of children at their own pace. Teachers are unable to cope with difference in children, not because they do not want to, but due to lack of training to identify students with disabilities”. All this stems from lack of awareness (Sen,2007cited in Pingle& Garg,2015). The teachers had some amount of awareness but an inadequate amount of information on disabilities and inclusive education (Maheswari& Shapurkar,2015). The research conducted by Sharma &

Samuel (2013) found that only a few teachers were aware about the provisions provided by government. Most of the teachers blamed the students' attitude and home environment for performing poorly in studies. Various studies carried out to investigate the knowledge and awareness of teachers regarding learning disabilities partially depends on teachers' awareness of these students' needs (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003; Papadopoulou, Kokaridas, Papanikolaou, & Patsiaouras, 2004). Teachers were aware of inclusive education in their schools (Agne, 2010). The lack of awareness among the general public as well as educators and officials in the education department is the first problem that needs to be addressed (Sawhney & Bansal, 2014).

By coming through the studies it is realized that there is a contradictory findings about the awareness of inclusive education among teachers. More number of studies found that teachers have lack of awareness about inclusive education (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003; Papadopoulou, Kokaridas, Papanikolaou, & Patsiaouras, 2004; Sharma & Samuel, 2013; Sawhney & Bansal, 2014) and very less number of study revealed that teachers were aware of inclusive education in their school (Agne, 2010) as founded by the researcher. So the present study is an attempt to explore the level of awareness of elementary teachers about inclusive education (i.e. the concept of inclusive education, provision by government and teachers' skill and knowledge to cater the diverse needs). The teacher needs to aware about the inclusive education so that they could identify and recognize the varied need of the student and accordingly create a welcoming and collaborative environment in school where each and every student feel valued and participate in classroom activity. The awareness of teachers is the most significant stipulation that allow for successful inclusion of special education into their classroom. So, the researcher has a keen interest to study the awareness of elementary school teachers about inclusive education and also understand their level of awareness on the basis of their gender (male & female), locality (Urban & Rural), Experience (more experience & less experience) and qualification etc.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the awareness of elementary school teachers about inclusive education
2. To study whether there exists any significant difference in the awareness of elementary school teachers about inclusive education with respect to their gender, locality, teaching experience, educational qualification and age.

Hypotheses of the study:

- H₀₁. There exists no significant difference between male and female teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level.
- H₀₂. There exists no significant difference between urban and rural teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level.
- H₀₃ There exists no significant difference between less experienced and more experienced elementary school teachers.
- H₀₄. There exists no significant difference among elementary school teachers with regard to their qualification.

H₀₅. There is no significant difference among the elementary school teachers with regard to their age.

METHODOLOGY

The present study comes under survey method. The target population of the present study comprises of all the teachers working in Government elementary schools of Odisha. The accessible population is all the teachers working in Government elementary schools of Cuttack and Bhadrak districts of Odisha. A total of 20 elementary schools were selected purposively out of which nine school were from urban area and eleven schools were from rural area. All the available teachers in these schools were selected as the sample for the present study. A total of 41 teachers from urban area and 59 teachers from rural area were selected.

An awareness test was developed by the investigators which include Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with Special needs, Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education. Data were analyzed by using inferential statistics such as, t- test and ANOVA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to Gender

Table-1: Dimension wise Significance of difference between mean awareness score of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to Gender

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P-value
Concept of Inclusive Education	Male	25	8.92	2.080	98	0.234*	0.816
	Female	75	8.80	2.266			
Legal Provisions of Inclusive education	Male	25	4.16	1.434	98	0.620*	0.536
	Female	75	4.35	1.257			
Basic Information about Children with Special needs	Male	25	.68	.690	98	0.380*	0.704
	Female	75	.73	.577			
Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education	Male	25	7.48	2.452	98	1.775*	0.079
	Female	75	8.43	2.261			
Over all	Male	25	21.08	5.649	98	1.036*	0.303
	Female	75	22.31	4.943			

* Not Significant

From the above table-1, mean awareness scores of male and female teachers about inclusive education are 21.08 and 22.31. t-Value and p- value are 1.036 and 0.303 respectively. P-value is more than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis “There exists no significant difference between male and female teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level” is retained.

When compared dimension-wise, p-values with respect to Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with Special needs, and Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education are more than 0.05. Hence, dimension-wise also there exists no significant difference between male and female teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level. It might be due to the reason that all elementary school teachers (both male and female) were provided training in all mentioned aspects of inclusive education.

The findings of the study align with the findings of Shah, 2005 (cited in Yadav, Das, Sharma & Tiwari, 2013) & Kern, 2006 while this finding is in contrast with the findings of other researcher such as Al Khatib (2007) who reported that female teachers were found to be significantly more knowledgeable than their male counterpart.

Awareness of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to locality

Table-2: Dimension wise Significance of difference between mean awareness score of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to locality

Dimension	Locality	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P-value
Concept of Inclusive Education	Urban	41	8.49	2.336	98	1.294	0.199
	Rural	59	9.07	2.108			
Legal Provisions of Inclusive education	Urban	41	4.24	1.480	98	0.358*	0.721
	Rural	59	4.34	1.169			
Basic Information about Children with Special needs	Urban	41	.63	.581	98	1.187*	0.238
	Rural	59	.78	.618			
Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education	Urban	41	7.98	2.465	98	0.764*	0.447
	Rural	59	8.34	2.248			
Over all	Urban	41	21.34	5.633	98	1.072*	0.287
	Rural	59	22.46	4.739			

* Not Significant

From the above table-2, mean awareness scores of urban and rural teachers about inclusive education are 21.34 and 22.46. t-value and p-value are 1.072 and 0.287 respectively. P-value is more than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis “There exists no significant difference between urban and rural teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level” is retained.

When compared dimension-wise, p-values with respect to Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with Special needs, and Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education are more than 0.05. Hence, dimension-wise also there exists no significant difference between urban and rural teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level. This might be due to

the fact that both urban and rural elementary school teachers were aware about different schemes under government and trained about inclusive education.

Awareness of Elementary school teachers' on inclusive education with regard to experience [Less Experience (<10 year), More Experience (≥10 year)]

Table-3: Dimension wise Significance of difference between mean awareness score of Elementary school teachers' on inclusive education with regard to experience

Dimension	Experience	N	Mean	SD	df	t- value	P- value
Concept of Inclusive Education	Less experienced Teacher	36	9.53	1.859	98	2.424**	0.017
	More experienced teacher	64	8.44	2.309			
Legal Provisions of Inclusive education	Less experienced Teacher	36	4.47	1.276	98	0.994*	0.322
	More experienced Teacher	64	4.20	1.311			
Basic Information about Children with Special needs	Less experienced Teacher	36	.58	.649	98	1.712*	0.090
	More experienced teacher	64	.80	.568			
Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education	Less experienced Teacher	36	8.64	2.193	98	1.450*	0.150
	More experienced teacher	64	7.94	2.390			
Over all	Less experienced Teacher	36	23.11	4.671	98	1.639*	0.104
	More experienced teacher	64	21.38	5.299			

** Significant * Not significant

From the above table-3, mean awareness scores of less experienced and more experienced teachers about inclusive education are 23.11 and 21.38. t- Value and p- value are

1.639 and 0.104 respectively. P-value is more than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis “There exists no significant difference between less experienced and more experienced teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level” is retained.

When compared dimension-wise, p-values with respect to Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with Special needs, and Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education are more than 0.05. Hence, dimension-wise also there exists no significant difference between less experienced and more experienced teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level. This might be due to the reason that both more experienced and less experienced teachers have knowledge about the learning environment in inclusive context and present practices of inclusion of children with special needs. This finding aligns with the finding of Essa & El-Zeftawy (2015), where it has been stated that awareness of teachers having more than 10 year and less than 10 year experience do not differ significantly.

Awareness of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to Professional Qualification

Table-4: Dimension wise Significance of difference between mean awareness score of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to Professional Qualification

Dimension	Experience	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value
Concept of Inclusive Education	C.T./D.El.Ed.	60	8.68	2.369	98	.811*	0.419
	B.Ed.& More	40	9.05	1.961			
Legal Provisions of Inclusive education	C.T./D.El.Ed.	60	4.22	1.290	98	.784*	0.435
	B.Ed.& More	40	4.42	1.318			
Basic Information about Children with Special needs	C.T./D.El.Ed.	60	.73	.607	98	.269*	0.789
	B.Ed.& More	40	.70	.608			
Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education	C.T./D.El.Ed.	60	7.90	2.341	98	1.532*	0.129
	B.Ed.& More	40	8.62	2.284			
Over all	C.T./D.El.Ed.	60	21.53	5.357	98	1.116*	0.267
	B.Ed.& More	40	22.70	4.740			

* Not Significant

From the above table-4, mean awareness scores of teachers with professional qualification C.T./D.El.Ed. and B.Ed.& more about inclusive education are 21.53 and 22.7. t-value and p-value are 1.116 and 0.267 respectively. p-value is more than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis “There exists no significant difference between C.T./D.El.Ed. and B.Ed.& more qualified teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level” is retained.

When compared dimension-wise, p-values with respect to Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with

Special needs, and Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education are more than 0.05. Hence, dimension-wise also there exists no significant difference between C.T./D.El.Ed. and B.Ed.& more qualified teachers on awareness of inclusive education at elementary level. This might be due to the fact that the teachers having C.T./D.El.Ed. and B.Ed. or more qualification were provided training (i.e. both pre- service and in- service) about inclusive education might be included in their curriculum.

Awareness of Elementary school teachers’ on inclusive education with regard to age

Table-5: Summary of ANOVA table on awareness of Inclusive education among the teachers of the age group of ≤30 year, 30-40 years and >40 years

Dimensions		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Concept of Inclusive Education	Between Groups	24.622	2	12.311	2.599*	0.080
	Within Groups	459.488	97	4.737		
	Total	484.110	99			
Legal Provisions of Inclusive education	Between Groups	5.555	2	2.778	1.669*	0.194
	Within Groups	161.445	97	1.664		
	Total	167.000	99			
Basic Information about Children with Special needs	Between Groups	.947	2	.473	1.304*	0.276
	Within Groups	35.213	97	.363		
	Total	36.160	99			
Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education	Between Groups	12.194	2	6.097	1.122*	0.330
	Within Groups	527.196	97	5.435		
	Total	539.390	99			
Over all	Between Groups	84.331	2	42.165	1.625*	0.202
	Within Groups	2517.669	97	25.955		
	Total	2602.000	99			

* Not significant

Above table -5 shows that the F- value of Awareness test scores of elementary school teachers in different aspects of inclusive education (i.e. Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about children with special needs and Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education) are 2.599, 1.669, 1.304, 1.122 and 1.625 respectively which are not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The overall F-

value is 1.625 which is also not significant at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates that the mean inclusive awareness score of elementary school teachers of the age group of ≤ 30 years, 30-40 years and > 40 years does not differ significantly. Therefore, the null hypothesis "There exists no significant difference among elementary school teachers with regard to age" is retained. The above findings are consistent with Adebowale and Moye (2013) who found that there was no significant difference in the knowledge possessed by respondents on the basis of age.

Major Findings and Conclusion

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. There exists no significant difference between the awareness of male and female elementary school teachers on inclusive education in all the four dimensions (i.e. Concept of Inclusive Education, Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with Special needs, Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education).
2. There exists no significant difference between the awareness of urban and rural elementary school teachers on Inclusive education in all the four dimensions.
3. There exists no significant difference between the awareness of more experienced and less experienced elementary school teachers on inclusive education related to Legal Provisions of Inclusive education, Basic Information about Children with Special needs, Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education but significant difference was found on Concept of Inclusive Education.
4. There exists no significant difference between the awareness of elementary school teachers having C.T./ D.El.Ed. and elementary school teachers having B.Ed. & more professional qualification on inclusive education in all the four dimensions.
5. There exists no significant difference among the teachers of different age groups on inclusive education in all the four dimensions.

The investigator speculates that the present study will help the teachers and policy makers in many ways that are highlighted as following:

Various training package provided by the government should properly implemented and practised by the teacher for developing their understanding about inclusive education. So that teachers can aware about provisions under various act and legislative policies to deal with CWSN.

The teacher can construct their understanding about various needs of the learner, so that they can design IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) to meet students' individual need. The teacher should acquire the skill to identify and support the children who need additional support to develop their potential like their peers.

The study will help the policy makers to frame such policies and laws, where all can understand and accept the concept of inclusion and the CWSN and children from marginalized section can find opportunities to get access to education.

The administrative authority at school level, block level and district level should take initiatives for organising awareness programmes and for implementing the policies initiated by International, National & State level to aware the teacher and make Inclusive education success.

Follow up studies may be conducted to examine to what extent the teachers are aware about inclusive education. The same study can be conducted by taking large number of teachers as sample. This study is limited to only four dimensions of inclusive education. So a study can also be undertaken by taking more numbers of dimensions of inclusive education.

Today the role of the teachers is diverse and they need to understand their contribution towards making the inclusive environment in the school. For creating an inclusive education, teacher needs to understand the children with special needs for which awareness of teachers is necessary. This study aimed to consider the awareness of elementary school teachers about inclusive education with regard to gender, locality, qualification, experience and age. The research findings show that there is no significant difference between the elementary school teachers in awareness about inclusive education in different dimensions (i.e. concept of inclusive education, legal provisions of inclusive education, basic information about children with special need) although their mean score vary but significant difference exists in between more experienced and less experienced elementary school teachers. The difference may exist because the teachers having more teaching experience would have the experience in teaching and interacting with CWSN. The findings of the study indicate that the elementary school teachers were aware about inclusive education. Still there is the need to aware the teachers of the school about Inclusive Education. In-service training and Orientation programmes should be conducted for in-service teachers on Inclusive Education to create awareness among elementary school teachers. The main recommendation included engagement of the teachers as the resource person to provide training to community members about inclusive education as they are aware about inclusive education. The policy makers should frame such policies where the scope of understanding the inclusive education will be there, so that all learners can get education. The officials/ administrative authorities should take action to implement the policies and take initiatives for organizing the awareness programme for teachers for upgrading their knowledge and skills regarding inclusive education.

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