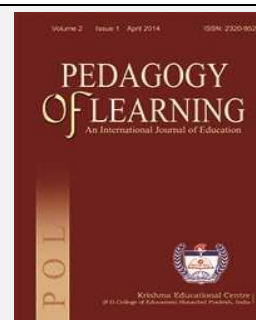


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Perception of Students and Teachers of Elementary Schools towards Inclusive Education

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the perception of students and teachers of elementary schools towards Inclusive education. Keeping in view the nature of the present study, the investigator developed the perception scale to get their perception regarding Inclusive education. The items for the scale were prepared according to the objectives of the study. The items prepared on a 5 point like type scale; the items were framed in a manner so as to have some appeal for the respondents to draw the required information. The methods followed for the study is descriptive in nature. The focus of study is to find out the perception of students and teachers towards achieving inclusive education at elementary level. Descriptive survey method is followed to collect data about the perception of students and teachers at elementary levels.

Keywords: Perception, Students, Teachers, Elementary Schools, Inclusive Education

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Inclusion has been defined as the acceptance of all pupils within the mainstream education system, taught within a common framework and identified as the responsibility of all teachers. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are made and every students has an opportunity to succeed. Inclusive education is based on ethical, social, educational and economic principles. It is a means to realize the right to high quality education without discrimination and with respect and dignity.

Inclusive education is not a programme, rather a philosophy. It started as a movement since 1990 conference on “Education for all” held on Thailand, views on NPE-1986, RTE Act-2009, etc. It is also vital that the teachers are psychologically prepared to teach a class comprised of diverse students. The positive attitudes of teachers towards all students have a major effect on the academic and social achievement of all students, especially those with disabilities.

Hence, it is essential to know about the students and teachers view about inclusive education and needs of children with disability. Therefore, the investigator is keen to undertake a study about the perception of students and teachers at elementary level towards inclusive education.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Sharda and Ranjan (2011) studied the awareness and attitude of the teachers working in CBSE schools in Coimbatore city towards inclusive education and found that there was a significant difference in the awareness level of the teachers based on the educational qualification and incidence of CWSN in their school. On the other hand, the number of years of experience of school teachers and incidence of CWSN in the school made a significant difference in their attitude.

Shah (2005) conducted a large-scale survey of 560 regular primary school teachers in Ahmedabad, India and reported that the teachers were moderately concerned about implementing inclusion. She reported that the teachers were most concerned about lack of infrastructure resources and least concerned about lack of social acceptance of students with disabilities in inclusive education classrooms.

Avramids & Norwich (2002) found that Teachers attitude could become more positive if more resources and supported are provided. This view of literature indicates that a key element in the successful implementation of the inclusive education policy is the views of the personnel who have the major responsibility for implementing it—that is teachers. Teacher’s beliefs and attitudes are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practices. The since teachers acceptance of the policy of inclusion is likely to affect their commitment to implementing it.

McLeskey, Waldron, Tak-shing, Swanson and Loveland (2001) surveyed two groups of teachers from six schools, one group consisted of three schools that had been involved in an inclusion programme over the previous year while the other group of three schools had yet to implement such a programme. While both groups overwhelmingly supported the inclusion model, the group of teachers already involved in inclusion had much more positive views regarding the practice. The result suggest that Teachers who have not previously been involved with inclusion may have serious concerns regarding implementation that need to be addressed prior to the programme in order for it to be successful with those teachers.

Reynolds (2001) stated that it is the knowledge, beliefs and values of the teachers that re brought to bear in creating an effective learning environment for pupils, making the teacher a critical influence in education for inclusion of children with special needs and the development of an inclusive set-up, capable to meet the diverse needs of the students.

Daane, Beirne- Smith and Dianne (2000:2) investigated the perceptions of elementary teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The setting was mostly rural but included some urban areas. All 324 elementary general education teachers, 42 elementary special education teachers and IS administrators were included in this study. The survey used a Likert type scale ranging from 1 to 4, with 24 possible response items ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The results indicate that all the respondents agreed that students have a right to be in the general education classroom, but all three groups disagreed with the notion that the teaching of the disabled within a general education classroom would be effective.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Inclusion has been defined as the acceptance of all pupils within the mainstream education system, taught within a common framework and identified as the responsibility of all teachers (Thomas,1997). Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are made and every student has an opportunity to succeed. Inclusive education is based on ethical, social, educational and economic principles. It is a means to realize the right to high quality education without discrimination and with respect and dignity. Say "no" to exclusion, discrimination and segregation which are traditionally experienced by weak groups, children with disabilities and special educational needs. Like Education for All, inclusive ensures the right to education to all learners regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties. In order to build fair society, inclusive initiatives often have a particular focus on those groups who have traditionally been excluded from opportunities. Amongst these weak groups, children with disabilities and special educational needs are often the most marginalized within education system and within society on general. They have often being placed in separate classes and schools. The inclusive education approach is particularly important for these groups. More important, special schools can play a vital part in supporting ordinary schools as they become more inclusive education is not a programme, rather a philosophy. It started as a movement since 1990 conference on "Education for all" held on Thailand, views on NPE-1986, RTE Act-2009, etc. It is also vital that the teachers are psychologically prepared to teach a class comprised of diverse students. The positive attitudes of teachers towards all students have a major effect on the academic and social achievement of all students, especially those with disabilities.

Hence, it is essential to know about the students' and teachers' view about inclusive education and needs of children with disability. Therefore, the investigator is keen to undertake a study about the perception of students and teachers at elementary level towards inclusive education.

Operational Definition of the key Terms

Inclusive Education: Inclusive education refers to inclusion of all children irrespective of caste, color, creed etc. It doesn't includes only people with disability, rather it includes people of various categories (e.g.-war affected, disadvantaged, nomads etc)

Perception: Perception refers to meaningful interpretation and sensation of a thing, person, institution or idea. In the present study, perception refers to opinion or view or attitude of students and teachers at elementary levels towards inclusive education.

Elementary Schools: Elementary schools refer to the schools that provide the first part of a child's education. It refers to all Government schools having classes from I-VIII.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research was undertaken to study the following objectives:-

1. To study the perception of teachers of elementary schools with respect to availability of infrastructure facilities, teaching learning process and evaluation process in an inclusive setting.
2. To study the perception of non-disabled students of elementary schools about their disabled peers with relation to their adjustment in an inclusive setting.
3. To study the problems faced by the teachers of elementary schools in transacting their lessons in an inclusive setting.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How do the teachers perceive with reference to availability of infrastructure facilities, teaching learning process and evaluation process in an inclusive setting at elementary level?
2. How do the non-disabled students perceive including their disabled peers with relation to their adjustment in an inclusive setting at elementary level?
3. What are the problems faced by the teachers in transacting their lessons in an inclusive setting at elementary level?

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The population of the study is limited to Cuttack city only.
- The study is limited to Elementary School Teachers and students only.
- Only five point likers type scales is used to study the perception of students and teachers towards inclusive education.
- Self-made unstandardized tools were used for collection of data.
- Perception towards inclusive education is limited to the dimensions like availability of infrastructure facilities, teaching learning process, evaluation process and students adjustment.

METHODOLOGY

The present study comes under the "Descriptive survey method". The aim of descriptive method is to describe the phenomena of the present situation. So here in the present study the focus is to find out the perception of students and teachers towards achieving inclusive education at elementary level. In this study the descriptive survey method is followed to collect data about the perception of students and teachers at elementary

level. According to LR.Gay (1990) Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to hypothesis or to answers question concerning the current status of the subject of the study.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the present study consists of all the Govt. Elementary Schools of Cuttack City. Five elementary schools were selected randomly from the Cuttack city as the sample. 100 Students and 20 teachers were selected randomly from the school.

TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

The tools developed and used to measure the perception of students and teachers towards inclusive education are:

1. Perception scale for teachers
2. Perception scale for students
3. Interview schedule for teachers
4. Inclusive Classroom observation schedule

TECHNIQUES OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data collect through perception scale, interview schedule and classroom observation schedule from the informants such as teachers and students were analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The quantitative techniques like percentage analysis was done and thick description was done under qualitative procedure.

Analysis of Perception of Teachers towards Inclusive Education with respect to Availability of Infrastructure Facilities, Teaching-Learning Process and Evaluation Process

The investigator studied the perception of elementary school teachers with regards to availability of infrastructure facilities, teaching learning process and evaluation process in an inclusive setting. Out of 45 items of the perception scale for teachers, 30 were belonging to teaching learning process, 10 were belonging to availability of infrastructure facilities and 5 were belonging to evaluation process. The investigator analyzed each of the dimensions stated above as follows:

Table-1: Availability of Infrastructure Facilities, Teaching Learning Process and Evaluation Process

Sl. No.	Perception of Teachers with regards to-	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Availability infrastructure facilities	88%	5%	0%	4%	3%
2	Teaching learning process	77.5%	5%	8%	7%	2.5%
3	Evaluation Process	72%	13%	1%	10%	4%

From the above table it is found that the perception of teachers towards inclusive education with respect to availability of infrastructure facilities is highly positive. Most of the respondents (88%) strongly agreed with the statements like-“There is a need of various kinds of assistive technology in inclusive classroom”,

“Lack of resources may make inclusive teaching impossible”, There is sufficient classrooms and toilets in the schools”, There is a need of special library for disabled students” A teaching assistant is available along with teachers to support students with disabilities” etc. This shows that overall perception of teachers towards inclusive education with respect to availability of infrastructure facilities is highly positive. Most of the teacher respondents (77.5%) strongly agreed with the statements like-“I respect students with disabilities as I respect all the children in my class”, Teaching with activity centered method creates positive feelings in students mind “,” Students are more attractive when educational technology uses in inclusive classroom”, Pre-service training is necessary to teach effectively”, Teachers should use different methods of teaching to satisfy the needs of disabled students”, I support inclusive teaching as a successful education system to address learners need” etc. This shows that most of the teachers of elementary schools perceive towards inclusive education with respect to teaching learning process positively.

It is found that the perception of teachers towards inclusive education with respect to evaluation process is positive. Most of the teacher respondents (72%) strongly agreed with the statements like-“Evaluation process must be flexible for disabled students”, “Much time should be given to disabled students in examination”, “No need of changes in examination system for disabled students”, “Students with disabilities are academically better than normal students in the classroom”, etc. This shows that overall perception of teachers towards inclusive education with respect to evaluation process is positive.

Analysis of Perception of Non-Disabled Students about their Disabled Peers with relation to their Adjustment

The investigator studied the perception of non-disabled students about their disabled peers with relation to their adjustment in an inclusive setting. For this, she prepared perception scale with consist of 30 items relating to their adjustment problems. The results are shown as follows:

Table-2: Perception of Non-Disabled Students about their Disabled Peers with relation to their Adjustment:

Perception of students	SA	A	U	D	SD
With their adjustment	73.13%	9.4%	2.03%	9.3%	6.14%

From above table ,it is found that the perception of non-disabled students about their disabled peers with relation to their adjustments is positive. Most of the students respondents (73.13%) strongly agreed with their statements like “I believe that every child regardless of disabilities has right to educated in regular class”, “There is a need to develop relationship with all category of students in classroom”, I develop confidence when I learn with disabled students”, My classmates including disabled students are very cooperative and friendly to

me”, Disabled students openly ask their peers for help in and outside the classroom”, The climate of the school supports the inclusion of students with special needs”, etc. This shows that the overall perception of non disabled students about their disabled peers with relation to their adjustment is positive.

Analysis of Interview Question Regarding Problems Faced By the Teachers:

- Regarding first question of the interview schedule,(what do you think about the importance of teaching disabled students with regular students in an inclusive setting) out of 20 teacher , most of the teachers said that there should be setting for both disabled and non-disabled students. There should not be any segregation or resource room facility for disabled students, so that they will feel welcoming and safe in the same classroom with their non-disabled peers.
- In answering the 2nd question of interview schedule (what kinds of needs does the disabled students have in learning in your class), all the agreed with the view that though they are the students with special needs, they have variety of needs based upon their disability. Some of the needs according to most of the teachers are- physical needs(comprise of all the facilities for the disabled students such as ramps, lift, brails, audio visual aids, hearing instruments etc) and proper methodology to deal with the need , interest and ability of the students with disabilities.
- In the answer of 3rd question (what kind of support do you give to disabled students to learn better,)most teachers answered in a positive way.They said,we think disabled students are equal with normal students.We don’t treat them in a different manner.we support them whatever they need any time.Physical support as well as mental support can give such students.Though they are the students with some special needs,they need support of others to cope up with the society.The teachers said,if we don’t help them in the schools,they will be demoralized and lose their heart.In school,the teacher is one who can give his hands to support those students.Though they are the one of the part of our society,in case they need moral support,we support them as our child.

Analysis of Observation of Classroom Problems Faced By the Teachers

The investigator studied the problems faced by the teachers in an inclusive classroom through observation schedule. She prepared 30 items for observation.

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS: A CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Perception of Teachers:	Yes	No
Classroom Observation	75.3%	24.7%

From the above table ,it is found that the researcher gets most of his answers in a positive manner.She strongly agrees with the statements like”The teachers use various kinds of methods in delivering his lessons to the students,” “The teachers use various types of assistive technology”,The teachers provide feedback to the students to guide their learning”, “The students silently and peacefully listens teachers voice in the classroom”, “The teachers

make clear the structure and objectives of the study etc. This shows that the teachers perceive positively the disabled students in an inclusive classroom.

The researcher strongly disagreed with the statements like “inclusive teaching increases teacher’s workload”, “There is a difference between theory and practice”, etc.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that most of the elementary school teachers were not facing any problems while teaching non-disabled students along with disabled students in an inclusive classroom. They use various types of technology and methods of teaching to meet the needs of disabled and non-disabled students and to make the teaching –learning process more effective. The disabled students also get help from their teachers to a great extent.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings of the study are as follows:-

1. Perception of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education is highly positive.
2. Perception of elementary school students towards inclusive education is highly positive.
3. Overall perception of teachers towards inclusive Education with respect to availability of infrastructure facilities is positive. They feel that appropriate facilities are highly essential for an inclusive education set-up.
4. Overall perception of teachers towards inclusive Education with respect to teaching learning process is positive. They feel that appropriate teaching learning environment is highly essential for an inclusive classroom.
5. Overall perception of teachers towards inclusive Education with respect to evaluation process is positive. They feel that appropriate evaluation process is highly essential for an inclusive education set-up.
6. Perception of non-disabled students about their disabled peers with relation to their adjustment in an inclusive setting is positive. They feel that they adjust properly with their disabled peers without any problem in an inclusive set-up.
7. Most of the teachers of elementary schools were not face any problem while transacting their lesson to the students in an inclusive classroom. Students were peacefully and silently listen to the teachers’ advice and achieve in their day to day life.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- i. The study will be beneficial for teachers. Through this study, they’ll be able to know about an inclusive setup, various methods of instruction, benefits of use of multi lingual education in classroom situation, co-operation between teachers and students, etc.
- ii. Further, the study will be beneficial for students. It will be helpful for promoting togetherness among them as well as achieving national goals. They will be able to create a gender bias free and level free environment among them.

- iii. The present study bears implications for the parents as well as the community members. Disabled are no more considered differently able. The parents of the special education needs children should exhibit positive attitude for the education for their children in the regular classroom along with normal children, rather than placing them in segregated setting exclusively meant for particular disability.
- iv. Government of policy makers are also able to find benefits from the study, They will more aware about their fault and also aware about the needs of students , teachers as well as society and will promote more facilities for setting up an inclusive society.
- v. More collaboration between regular special educators, more professional's collaboration should be ideal, and becomes an integral part of any educational programme.
- vi. Educational consultants, curriculum specialists, school psychologists and other personnel should pool their expertise in order to develop academic learning activities that impact upon behavior.

SUGGESTIONS

- The same study can also be undertaken in both rural and urban areas of Cuttack District for a longer duration of time which give a better understanding.
- The study may be taken from large sample group and conducted various sorts of schools like run by NGOs, private, and public & Government schools.
- The same study can be taken including the perception of stakeholders.
- A comparative study of primary and secondary schools teachers' attitude towards inclusive education also should be undertaken.
- In order to determine the factors behind the positive and negative attitude held by teachers towards inclusion, this researcher recommends adding perception questions to the survey.
- The study may use to improve the adjustment of teachers and students in inclusive schools.
- Special educators should be employed in each and every school either government schools or private schools.
- Finally, the researcher suggests that there is a need to investigate specific details about teachers' attitude as they relate to inclusion, student learning, classroom management and the emerging factors related to perception of how inclusion will affect behavior and the school environment.

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