

A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ABOUT THE FACTORS HINDERING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS OF KERALA

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Abstract

Right to education act and all Inclusive education strategies ensure provision of education towards educating the differently abled children along with normal ones. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. The children with various disabilities find it difficult to fully participate in outdoor and indoor educational activities either due to academic, social, physical or environmental limitations. The present study analyzes the perception of secondary school teachers regarding the factors which hinders the smooth implementation of inclusion in schools of Kerala. The study was conducted on a sample of 40 secondary school teachers of Thrissur and Kottayam district. A questionnaire was prepared on the basis of different perspectives of Inclusive education and a survey was conducted among teachers using the questionnaire prepared. The analysis of data obtained showed that there are certain issues existing in the schools such as academic, social and physical constraints in the implementation of effective Inclusion. The paper also describes about the possible remedial measures that should be adopted for minimizing these difficulties.

Keywords: - Inclusive education, barriers to Inclusion, Secondary school level

Introduction

Inclusive Education (IE) is an approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties along with the normal ones. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. All children whether disabled or able bodied have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the “World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar and Senegal, 2000). Inclusive Education is a process of enhancing participation and minimizing exclusion, in a manner that successfully responds to the diverse needs of all learners. Inclusive education is the central means for achieving the goals of ‘Education for all promoting a child-centered approach to teaching and learning throughout the life course.

Status of Inclusive Education in India

India has been committed to fulfilling the goal of education for all and ‘inclusive education’ is now a feature of various government documents and plans. However, between 35 and 80 million of India’s 200 million school age children do not attend school. In addition, fewer than five percent of children who have a disability are in school. India has over 80 million people with disabilities and many of them have been denied the education opportunity until recently. As per Census 2001, the literacy level of the disabled population is only 49 per cent. Literacy rates for the disabled female population are around 37 per cent as compared to the national average of over 54 per cent for the female population. Literacy rates for the disabled male population are 58.14 per cent as compared to 75.85 per cent for males.

Inclusive education in India is seen by many as a matter of providing education for children with disabilities. UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability in India 2000 states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. The Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998) reports that of India's 200 million school-aged children (6–14 years), 20 million require special needs education. While the national average for gross enrolment in school is over 90 per cent, less than five per cent of children with disabilities are in school.

Inclusive education system

Inclusive Education (IE) is an approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties along with the normal ones. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. All children whether disabled or able bodied have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar and Senegal, 2000). Inclusive Education is a process of enhancing participation and minimizing exclusion, in a manner that successfully responds to the diverse needs of all learners. It Includes teaching and learning needs of all marginalized and vulnerable children and young people; including street children, girls, children from ethnic minorities etc. It aims to ensure that these children are accorded equal rights and opportunities in education. It stresses more on evolving inclusive practices which can be adapted in various contexts. Inclusive education is the central means for achieving the goals of 'Education for all promoting a child-centered approach to teaching and learning throughout the life course.

Challenges of Inclusive Education

Implementing inclusive education requires considerable changes to organizations, practice, norms and more. As inclusive education is a process, it will be motivating and encouraging when all factors leading to its success have been taken into consideration and acted upon for its improvement (inclusive practice). That is, providing the necessary equipment and materials to support inclusive education. There are some factors that make implementing and the practice of inclusive education a challenge for both the government and the people in the country and therefore the disabled children as well.

1. Parents (families) and Negative Attitudes in Society

People need to have good motives and intentions about the practice of inclusive education in both the schools and in society. Slee (2011) claimed that people should have a good mindset and positive attitude towards inclusive education. As people develop positive attitudes towards inclusive education, implementing and practicing inclusive education becomes easier. In order for that, people need to know the importance of inclusive education. They need to be educated about it and the reasons why they need to develop good behavior towards disabled children and send them to regular school to help them get a quality education (Slee, 2011). Educating the public will therefore, help to embrace and motivate children with disabilities to be in the regular schools and the society. If the public does not develop a positive attitude towards disabled children, thus raising awareness, the implementation and practice of the plan becomes a challenge.

2. Teacher's Negative Attitude

As it comes to discussing families and social attitude towards disabled children, it is important to consider the teachers. Obeng-Asamoah (2016) argues that teachers can develop a positive attitude towards children with special needs, however, when teachers are not trained to handle these children in regular or segregated schools, it becomes a challenge for them to handle and develop a positive attitude towards them (Agbenyega, 2007).

Inclusive education opens opportunities for disabled children and realizes their right to be educated in the regular schools (Kuyini, 2010). Therefore, it is significant for teachers and school leaders to be aware of what inclusive education is all about, which means, they need to be introduced to the concept. Introducing the concept means that teachers need to have teacher training in the Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) to equip them with the views and importance of inclusive education, thus, developing a positive attitude towards disabled children and gaining knowledge and skills on how to handle them (Agbenyeya, 2007; Kuyini, 2010). Teachers must also receive training in teaching approaches and styles suitable to teach all children.

3. Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

If teachers are to develop a positive attitude towards inclusive education, they must first be educated, trained and supported. Proper facilities and infrastructures need to be provided in the schools to encourage and motivate teachers to teach disabled children (Kuyini, 2010). Agbenyega (2007) added that it is important to provide the resources and facilities to offer opportunities for disabled children. This is part of the proper organization to help include disabled children into mainstream schools and make sure the facilities needed to improve their learning are provided in the school (Sharma, 2015). Kuyini (2010) supports the idea of providing the necessary facilities for the implementation and practice of inclusive education to be effective. Similarly, Kuyini and Boitumelo (2011) added that it is necessary to provide more facilities for effective inclusion. They state that lack of these facilities and infrastructures lead teachers to develop a negative attitude towards children with special needs and teachers think these children need to be excluded. Lacking facilities and resources in school make teachers have limited knowledge and skills in handling these children. Kuyini and Boitumelo (2011) concluded that limited resources and facilities and lack of training for teachers act as a barrier to practicing and implementing inclusive education.

Need and Significance of the Study

The studies conducted by Slee (2011) emphasize the need for a positive mindset for the successful implementation of Inclusive education. The study by Agbenyega (2007) highlighted that proper training of student teachers is necessary for successful inclusion. Moreover the studies by Kuyini (2010) and Kuyini and Boitumelo (2011) suggested that proper facilities and infrastructure are also needed for the right implementation of Inclusive practices in school settings. From these studies the investigator identified the need for understanding the perception of secondary school teachers about the factors namely infrastructural barriers, attitudinal barriers and Methodological barriers which are supposed to hinder the successful inclusion in schools. By analyzing the perception of teachers in these aspects, the higher authorities can plan effective remedial measures for minimizing these difficulties to the level possible. Hence the investigator decided to find out the extent of perception of secondary school teachers about the factors hindering inclusive education among schools of Kerala.

Objectives of the Study

- To find out the extent of difference in the perception of secondary school teachers about the factors hindering Inclusive Education among schools of Kerala

Hypothesis of the Study

- There will be significant difference in the level of perception of secondary school teachers about the factors hindering Inclusive Education among schools of Kerala

Sample Selected for the Study

A total sample of 40 Secondary school teachers from secondary schools of Kottayam and Thrissur were selected for the study. Out of this 40, 20 were regular secondary school teachers and the remaining 20 were IED teachers appointed for the teaching – learning process of Disability students in schools as part of Inclusion.

Tool selected for the Study

A questionnaire was prepared by the Investigator based on the different factors hindering Inclusive Education namely infrastructural barriers, attitudinal barriers and Methodological barriers. The questionnaire consists of 15 items based on the three factors. Each question has two options namely 'Yes' or 'No'. The total score of the questionnaire was 15.

Statistical Technique Used

- Percentage Analysis

Limitations of the study

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Experience of the Teachers

Delimitations of the study

- ✓ Study was delimited to Kottayam and Thrissur district only
- ✓ Only three factors were selected for the study

Results and Discussion

The analysis was carried out by the Investigator mainly to find out the perception of secondary school teachers about the factors hindering effective inclusion in schools run by Government of Kerala. The analysis carried out was discussed under the following heads.

1. Perception of Secondary school teachers about the Infrastructural factors hindering effective inclusion in schools run by Government of Kerala

The investigator calculated the percentages for the responses elicited by the teachers for the five questions based on Infrastructural factors incorporated in the questionnaire. The results were tabulated as shown in the table 1.

Table 1

Responses of secondary school teachers regarding the dimension – Infrastructural factors

Sl. No.	Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Does the school provide ramp facility of students with special needs?	88.70	11.30
2	Does the lightning arrangement in the classroom appropriate to students with special needs?	28	72
3	Does the school classrooms are structured in such a manner to include students with special needs?	27	73
4	Do playgrounds in schools cater to the needs of students with special needs?	40	60
5	Does sufficient learning materials are available in schools in order to promote the learning of students with special needs?	28.60	71.40

From the table 1, it was clear that most of the schools doesn't provide any proper lightning arrangement in the class rooms in order to cater the needs of students with poor visual abilities. It was also evident from the analysis that the class room arrangements are insufficient to meet the learning needs of students with special needs. The playgrounds in most of the schools are inappropriate to the students with special needs. This often results in a reluctance of students with special needs towards sports and games activities. Moreover sufficient learning materials are also not available for students with special needs. It is also a good finding that most of the schools are providing facilities like ramp for students with special physical needs. The results are summarized as shown in the figure 1.

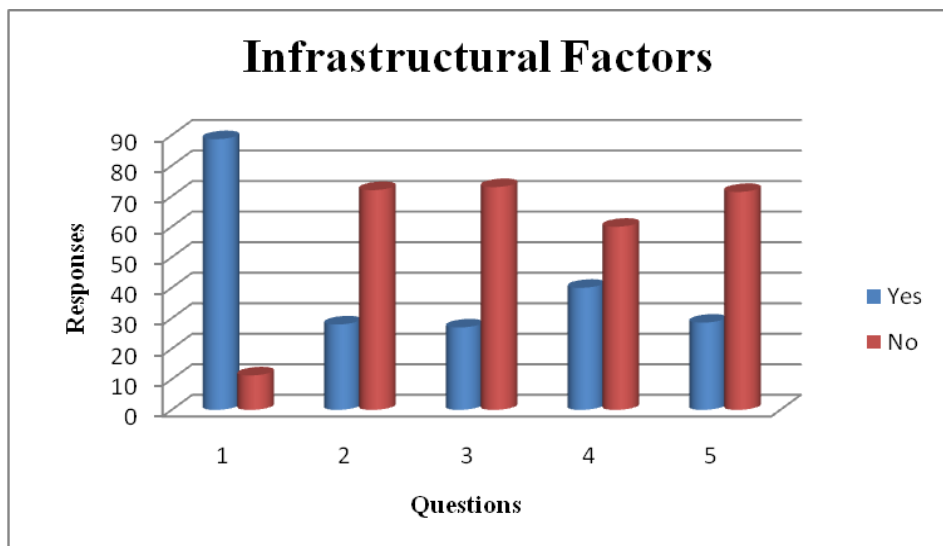


Figure 1: Graphical representation for the secondary school teachers for the dimension – Infrastructural factors

2. Perception of Secondary school teachers about the Attitudinal factors hindering effective inclusion in schools run by Government of Kerala

The investigator calculated the percentages for the responses elicited by the teachers for the five questions based on attitudinal factors incorporated in the questionnaire. The results were tabulated as shown in the table 2.

Table 2

Responses of secondary school teachers regarding the dimension – Attitudinal factors

Sl. No.	Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Do the students in the class room cooperate properly with students with special needs and learning disabilities?	33	67
2	Do the students with special needs feel comfortable in the inclusive class rooms?	34.67	65.33
3	Do the teachers provide proper consideration to students with special needs in the Inclusive class rooms?	76	24
4	Do the PTA in school show respect to the feelings of students with special needs?	48.33	51.67
5	Do the social bodies take any special interest in the learning of students with special needs?	46.80	53.20

From the table 2, it was clear that most of the students do not cooperates properly with students with special needs. This often leads to the development of an inferiority complex and segregation from normal students in the class room. As the results shows the students with special needs feels uncomfortable in the class room. It was a good finding that the teachers both IED teachers and normal secondary school teachers provides proper consideration to the needs of students with special needs. From the results it was clear that the PTA has to involve more in the issues related to students with special needs. Moreover the findings reveal those social bodies like Grama panchayath, Block panchayath and other similar local bodies should take more innovative programs for the upliftment of students with special needs. The results are summarized as shown in the figure 2.

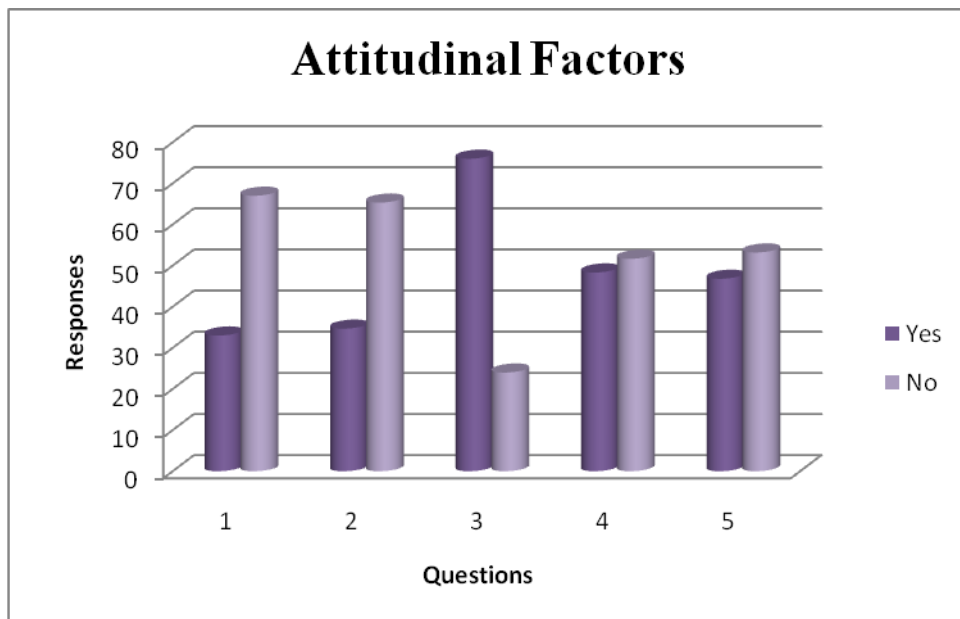


Figure 2: Graphical representation for the secondary school teachers for the dimension – Attitudinal factors

3. Perception of Secondary school teachers about the Methodological factors hindering effective inclusion in schools run by Government of Kerala

The investigator calculated the percentages for the responses elicited by the teachers for the five questions based on methodological factors incorporated in the questionnaire. The results were tabulated as shown in the table 3.

Table 3

Responses of secondary school teachers regarding the dimension – Methodological factors

Sl. No.	Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Do the present teaching methods sufficient for dealing with the problems of students with special needs in an Inclusive class room?	40	60
2	Are you of the opinion that the lesson plan preparation in B.Ed curriculum should include the components necessary for Inclusive class rooms?	85.40	14.60
3	Does the learning efficiency of students with special needs enhance as a result of Inclusion?	33	67
4	Does the teaching method enhance the skills of students with special needs?	42.67	57.33
5	Does the present teaching learning method make the students with special needs able to lead a better living in the future?	18	82

From the table 3, it was clear that the present teaching methods are insufficient for dealing with problems of students with special needs. The results revealed that the present B.Ed lesson plan has to incorporate the components necessary for inclusive teaching so that it may be applicable to the normal class room settings. The Inclusive education should enhance the learning efficiency and skills of students with special needs. Moreover the class room teaching and learning process should make the students with special needs to lead a better living for the future. The results are summarized as shown in the figure 3.

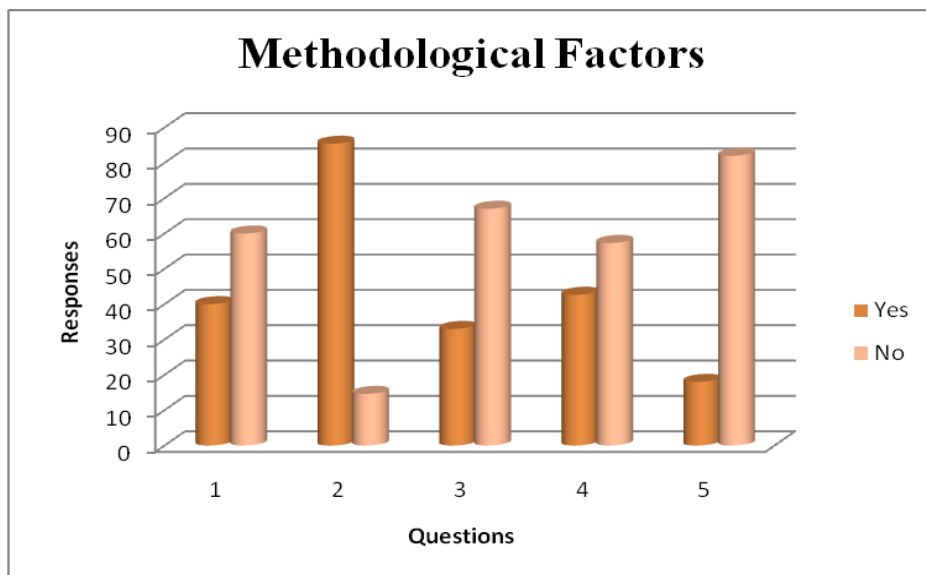


Figure 3: Graphical representation for the secondary school teachers for the dimension – Methodological factors

Suggestions for Effective Inclusion in School Class rooms

- ❖ Organize orientation programs and specialized training programmes for regular school teachers to acquaint them with different disabilities, barriers free environment and their related special needs.
- ❖ Classroom apparatus should be designed while keeping in mind the particular child such as corner seats with lap straps, footrests etc.
- ❖ The Paths from gate to playground and school buildings must be clear and leveled.
- ❖ Use of concrete objects as Teaching Learning Material needs to be emphasized
- ❖ The classrooms should be spacious so that it would not restrict the movement of child with physical disability
- ❖ Learning aids with regard to various disabilities need to be easily available and accessible
- ❖ Teachers should prepare the lesson for the class by keeping in mind the level of understanding of the child, including students with special needs
- ❖ Access to communication and information in the required language through interpreters, electronic devices should be ensured properly
- ❖ To enhance communication and mobility skills, peer support should be used effectively
- ❖ Teacher Education programmes should incorporate the elements of Inclusive education during the construction of Lesson plans based on activity method

Conclusion

Students with disabilities are entitled to strive for the removal of institutional, physical, informational & attitudinal barriers in society and emphasized that all schools should be made inclusive by minimizing multiple barriers prevalent. To provide barrier free access, to children with disabilities, it is opined to eradicate all sorts of barriers prevailing in and around the schools. Therefore, we need to understand the problems in the educational system and focus on fostering barrier free access so as to ensure that every child with or without disability can learn.

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