

# Awareness on Disability and Inclusive Education among the Prospective Teachers

## Abstract

*Inclusive education is a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities (Right to Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD Act, 2016). The goal of inclusive education is to provide the most appropriate, equitable learning environment and opportunities to all students. This study focused on inclusive education for students with disabilities. The success of inclusive education is based on the attitude and acceptance of teachers and peer group. Teacher should have some knowledge about the different disability conditions and appropriate teaching methods in order to handle students with disabilities in the classroom environment. These skills and knowledge should be provided in their training programme itself. The study was an attempt to explore the awareness of prospective teachers on disability and inclusive education. 100 prospective teachers from ten B.Ed. Colleges situated in and around Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu State were selected as samples. A questionnaire on the various aspects of disability and inclusive education was prepared by the researchers to collect the data. The results were discussed based the quantitative analysis. The finding shows that the Prospective teachers have very low awareness on disability and inclusive education.*

**Keywords:** Awareness, Prospective Teacher, Disability and Inclusive Education.

## Introduction

Present student-teachers or prospective teachers are the future teacher of our nation. They are the backbone for providing quality education to the students. The pre-service teacher education programme provides opportunities to them in practicing and developing skills and knowledge to improve students' learning. Education is the primary right of human being. According to the Article – 21A of Indian Constitution, the state shall provide free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years (The Constitution of India, updated version, 2019). It is applicable to students with disabilities also. Inclusive education refers to the concept that all children learn together in the same schools. Every child

has a right to inclusive education (UNICEF, 2017). According to RPwD Act 2016 it is a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities. The success of inclusive education depends upon the attitude and acceptance of teachers and peer group. True inclusive education depends on the capacity of teachers in terms of knowing the nature of disability, selecting appropriate methods and materials for teaching students with disabilities. They play a critical role in creating inclusive environment that encourage and motivate students with disabilities to actively participate in the classroom activities.

## Review of Literature

Campbell et al (2003) mentioned that the regular education teachers have expressed fears towards inclusion. This is because of their inability to accommodate students with special needs in their classes. Julka (2006) conducted a research study to highlight the instructional adaptations that are considered to be desirable and feasible in an inclusive classroom by regular teachers. The results show that the teachers could not select appropriate strategies in their classroom. This could be because of lack of knowledge about the disability. Ferguson (2008) noted that inclusive practice is not easy because it attempts to make learning available to everybody, everywhere and all the time.

Singal (2010) argued that in the inclusive classroom the mainstream teachers assume that the needs of children with disability should be taken care by the resource teachers or special educators and is not the primary concern of the general teachers. The author also quoted that the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2005) paper, recommended that there is a need to develop pedagogical skills among the future teachers of all teacher education programmes to handle all students in inclusive classrooms. Shukla and Agrawal (2015) have assessed the level of and awareness of learning disability among teachers of primary schools. The study result shows that the knowledge and awareness about learning disabilities among teachers of primary schools is very low.

Radojichikj and Natash (2015) conducted a study on teachers' acceptance of students with disabilities. The results inferred that the majority of teachers try to support individual capabilities and make some adaptations to students' needs, and use a variety of assessment procedures for all students. But they noticed that teachers don't feel comfortable in interaction with students with mental and physical disabilities, and in the communication with parents of students

with disability. The result also indicates that teachers are not happy with supporting services provided in the classroom.

Limaye (2016) stated that the teacher must have trained skills in order to provide appropriate instruction to students with disabilities. The author also pointed out that the teacher attitude plays a major role in educating children with disabilities in social, emotional and intellectual development. Majority of the school employees in India are not trained to educate students with disabilities in the inclusive schools. And also they have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities. The reasons for this negative attitude might be they are not trained to handle students with disabilities.

Mader (2017) stated that teacher should have the knowledge and the ability to teach students with special needs. Now students with disabilities are enrolled in the inclusive schools, and mostly they are spending their days in general education classrooms than in special classes. General education teachers are teaching and spending more time with students with disabilities but, they have very little training on handling students with special needs.

Times of India (2018) reported that in Chandigarh, school going students with disabilities are facing difficult times due to not having enough educators to handle them. As per the academic session 2017 – 2018, there are around 4,418 students with disabilities enrolled in the different schools with only 26 special educators. It shows that one educator on every 196 students with special needs.

Kumar and Kumar (2018) stated that the number of disabilities increased from seven to twenty one as per RPwD Act, 2016. The roles and responsibilities of general educators, special educators and administrators should be reviewed to implement the revised RPwD Act. The general educators and special educators should be developed skills and knowledge to handle students with special disabilities. Accordingly the curriculum of pre-service and in-service teacher training

programmes need revision to provide comprehensive training to their trainees to cater the needs of disabled students.

## Need of the Study

Diniz (2017) mentioned that according to the 2011 Census, 2.70 crore people with disabilities are living in India. Minimum 15 lakh special educators are required to address the needs of disabled population, but currently 90,000 to 1 lakh rehabilitation professionals are registered with the Rehabilitation Council of India. This statistics shows the importance and the role of general teacher in inclusive education. Successful inclusive education programme depends on well-trained teachers. One of the major issue in inclusive education is teachers need to be trained on curricular adaptation and evaluation methods to handle the students with disabilities (SSA, Confluence report, 2016). It shows that teachers should be skilled enough to understand the students' diverse needs. They should have some knowledge about the different disability conditions and teaching methods in order to handle students with disabilities in the classroom environment.

These skills and knowledge should be provided in their training programme itself. In addition to teaching methodology specifically for children with disabilities, teachers must also have the positive attitude towards inclusion and acceptance. If the teachers are trained in the disability areas, the students with various disabilities can have more accessibility to get equal opportunities, full participation which leads to total inclusion. But the present scenario is that Tamil Nadu Teacher Education University (TNTEU) syllabus (2016 onwards) contains very minimal amount of content regarding the inclusive education and disability. Totally 11 courses/papers are there in B.Ed programme among them only one course/paper deals with inclusive education. Teacher trainees will not be equipped with the required skills and knowledge to handle children

with disabilities with this content. Hence a need was felt to study the awareness of teachers' trainees on disability and inclusive education.

## Methodology

### Objective of the Study

To find out the awareness on disability and inclusive education among prospective teachers.

## Methodology

### Research Design

Survey method under descriptive research design was adopted for this present study.

### Sample

100 prospective teachers from Ten B.Ed. Colleges situated in and around Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu State were selected as sample for this present study through random sampling method.

### Research Tool

A questionnaire on the various aspects of disability and inclusive education was prepared by the researchers to collect the data. It consists of 30 questions with yes or no options presented under six major aspects namely

1. Inclusive education
2. Types of disability
3. Teaching methods and materials
4. Assessment and Evaluation
5. Assistive Technology
6. Government Facilities & Schemes

## Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed and instructions were given to the sample to read all the questions carefully and to give their responses in the respective columns. The

collected data was then analyzed for further interpretation.

## Results

### Discussion based on awareness about inclusive education

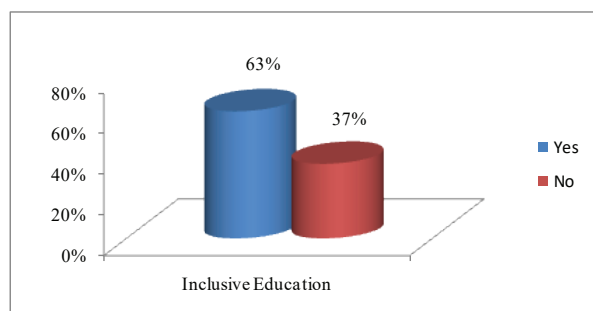


Figure 1: Awareness about Inclusive Education

Inclusive education brings all students together in one classroom. Five questions related to inclusive education were asked to the sample. The results show that 63% of prospective teachers were aware of the meaning and ideas of inclusive education. They mentioned that the main ideas of the inclusive education are to include all children to learn together, to get appropriate educational needs and to involve in all activities without any discrimination.

### Discussion based on awareness about types of disability

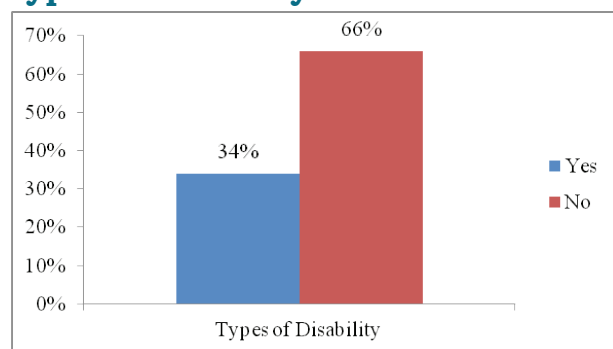


Figure 2: Awareness about the Types of Disability

According to Right of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016, person with disability means a person with long term physical,

mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others. There are 21 types disabilities are mentioned in this act, they are Blindness, Low Vision, Leprosy Cured persons, Locomotor Disability, Dwarfism, Intellectual Disability, Mental Illness, Cerebral Palsy, Specific Learning Disabilities, Speech and Language disability, Hearing Impairment, Muscular Dystrophy, Acid Attack Victim, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Thalassemia, Hemophilia, Sickle Cell disease, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Chronic Neurological conditions and Multiple Disabilities including Deaf Blindness. Questions were asked based the types of disability to the samples. Majority of the prospective teachers (66%) were not aware about the RPwD Act 2016. Only 34% of samples were aware about few types of disabilities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, and intellectual disabilities.

### Discussion based on awareness about teaching methods and materials

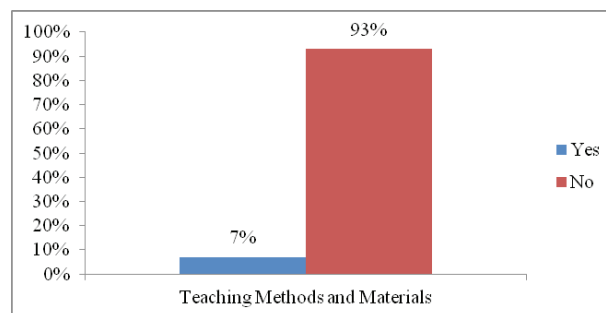


Figure 3: Awareness about Teaching Methods and Materials

Selection of appropriate teaching methods and materials are imperative in teaching learning process. It is important that teacher trainees must have some knowledge about the different methods and materials used for teaching students with disabilities. Adaptations in the curriculum, content, materials are important to teach students with disabilities for better understanding and conceptual thinking. It requires more efforts from the teachers to follow these strategies. Adaptation should be done based the unique



needs of special need children. Questions related to teaching methods, teaching materials, adaptations were asked to the samples. The results showed that very few prospective teachers (7%) have the knowledge about the materials and the remaining 93% of prospective teachers reported that they were not aware about the methods and materials to handle students with disabilities. The 7% of samples knew about the methods as they have visited one or two special schools as the part of curriculum.

Discussion based on awareness about assessment and evaluation of disability

Assessment and evaluation are the essential beginning step in the education process for a child with a disability. Initial assessment and evaluation is important before providing any kind of education to children. According to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990) the purpose of conducting assessment and evaluation are to see if the child is a child with a disability, to gather information that will help determine the child’s educational needs and to guide decision making about appropriate educational programming for the child. Teachers should know the basic aspects of assessment and evaluation procedures, which is helpful for them to understand the strengths, needs and problems of the children. The result shows that none of the prospective teachers were aware about the assessment, goal setting and preparation of individualized educational plan and evaluation techniques procedure for students with disabilities.

### Discussion based on awareness about assistive technology and devices

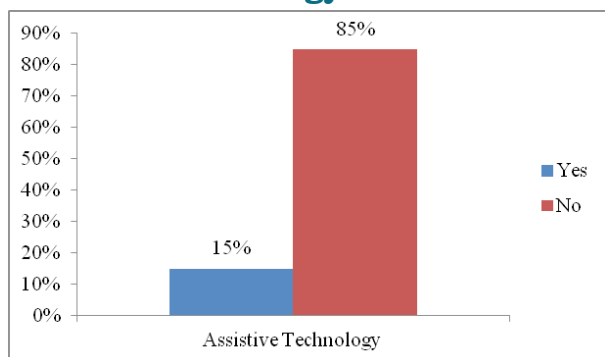


Figure 5: Awareness about the Assistive Technology and Devices

Assistive technology is any tool or device that helps students with disabilities to perform activities more quickly, easily or independently. Assistive technology devices enhance the participation of students with disabilities in the home, school and community. Teacher should have basic knowledge about assistive devices for different disabilities based on their needs and abilities. Five questions related to assistive technology were asked to the prospective teachers the results shows that only 15% were aware about the assistive technology and its uses. It shows prospective teachers should have the knowledge about the devices which are used for students with disabilities.

### Discussion based on awareness about Government facilities & schemes

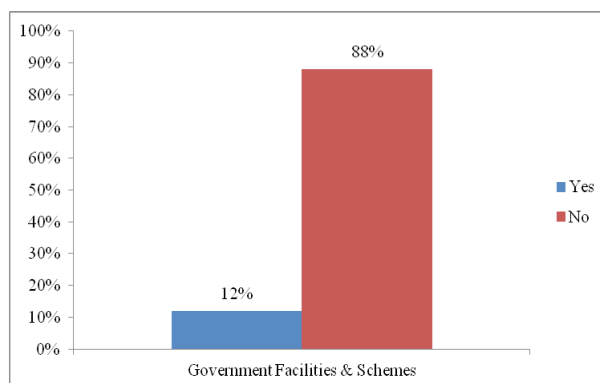


Figure 6: Awareness about Government Facilities & Schemes

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India announced various facilities and schemes for students with disabilities. Teacher should have the knowledge about some of the various schemes and facilities available for special children like scholarships, eligibility requirement, mode of applying, award of scholarship, children’s educational allowance, railway travel concession, and other concessions. The result showed that only 12% of prospective teachers were aware about the ADIP (Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase / Fitting of Aids and Appliances) scheme and reservation policy and remaining 88% of them were not aware

about the facilities and schemes meant for students with disabilities.

## Findings

The findings of this study are made based on the analysis. They are:

- Majority of the selected samples were aware about the knowledge about inclusive education.
- Very few were aware about the disability and its types.
- Countable numbers of answers were received from the prospective teachers about the various methods and materials used for students with disabilities.
- Prospective teachers were not aware about the assessment and evaluation procedure for students with disabilities.
- Majority of the samples were not aware about the meaning and use of assistive technology.
- Few samples were aware about the facilities and schemes meant for students with disabilities.

## Educational Implications

- The study will help the policy makers to add more content related to disability in the teacher preparation programme.
- The study will help the prospective teachers to equip them in the area of disability and handling students with disabilities.

## Conclusion

Inclusive education means that all children including children with disabilities are educated in regular classrooms. Through this inclusive education children with disabilities are able to participate in the community activities. It also provides better opportunities for learning. It helps them to independent in all their activities. A true inclusive education is possible only because of the teacher attitude and knowledge on the disability. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) stated that teachers' training programmes will be reoriented, in particular for teachers of primary classes, to deal with the special difficulties of the handicapped children. In the draft National Educational Policy 2019, under inclusive education in teacher preparation mentioned that the inclusive education will be an integral part of both pre-service teacher education as well as in in-service professional development, including for Anganwadi workers, pre-school and school teachers, school leaders, and other education functionaries. These programmes will ensure that all teachers are continuously sensitised about different learners and hence will be able to cater to the educational needs of all learners. Based on the recommendations given by the various acts, the study results conclude that there is a significant need for providing content and training on disability in the curriculum of B.Ed. teacher trainees to handle students with disabilities.

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