

Footstep towards Inclusive Education

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Abstract

Inclusive education is a rising trend in the world. The first step towards inclusive education is providing the awareness to the general education teachers. This study focused to investigate the general education teachers of primary and secondary level awareness about the special education and inclusive education. This study is descriptive method used survey type. Closed ended questionnaire developed for collecting data. 300 teachers were selected as sample from primary and secondary schools through random sampling technique. Teacher's awareness level unfortunately not good particularly primary rural areas school teachers. The age groups (25-30) of teachers with high qualification have strong awareness level about special education (90%) and inclusive education (40%). While, senior age group (51-55) have poor knowledge about special education (40%) and inclusive education (2%). Respondents' education matters regarding awareness about special education and inclusive education. Awareness level was escalating with education.

Keywords: Inclusive education, awareness, teachers training

1. Introduction

The teachers should add the different teaching strategies for the individual needs of special children. Special need children face some difficulties to cope the general instructional strategies and general curricula. Teachers should adapt the curriculum according the special children needs and abilities and use the instructional strategies according to the needs of special child abilities and interests [3].

The teacher's attitude towards inclusive education depends upon their information and knowledge about the inclusion. The teachers who have the enough knowledge about disabilities and inclusive education show the positive attitude and those who have not enough knowledge show difficulties and inability to handle the special children in inclusive classroom [1].

They have not the technical education to manage the special children in the general classroom with normal children. Without training placement of the special children in the normal classroom is forceful [3].

Points out that teachers' attitude towards inclusive education reveals their abilities to meet the individual needs of students with disability. He accentuates those teachers who are knowledgeable and have training and background in handling children with special needs drew positive attitudes [5].

The innovative teaching ideas add for the special need children for adjustment in the inclusive classroom. He supports the idea of accommodation and adaptation for the diverse needs children in inclusive classroom [4].

Inclusion is a new way of thinking about education. It not only challenges the orthodox and traditional segregated educational system which treats children on the basis of their ability, but also raises questions on policy, political, social and economic processes which support this educational system[6].

Many researchers, the world over, have noted not only the educational benefits for children suffering from impairment but also pointed out the improved socialization of these children [3].

In spite of these educational and social benefits and economic viability of inclusive education, problems have been noted in its implementation, the world over. At macro level these problems include political non-commitment and lapses in inclusion-friendly policy transformation, intellectual base to support inclusion, meager financial allocations, cultural and academic bias in favor of traditional school system. Whilst at micro-level these problems include school-infrastructure adjustment, inappropriate school leadership / management, teacher's professional training, in-effective curriculum adaptation / modification and special student's socialization issues [2].

For many countries, though, they are still struggling to manage and implement an education system that justly caters for diversity (United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2008). By 2009, which is half way to achieving the Dakar goals, at least 75 million primary school-aged children have still never been to school with more than half of these living in countries affected by conflict.

Pakistan is, on the other hand, a curious case when it comes to implementation of inclusive education. The sixth larger population-wise country is haunted by myriad problems like tattered democratic institutions, terrorism, political instability, corruption, very weak and flawed institutional structure and weak economic base [7].

Due to these problems, generally, and political-non-commitment, specifically, the situation of education is not very healthy in the country. Pakistan is far away from achieving 100% literacy rate or 100% primary enrollment. The situation in rural areas and of special need children is even worst [9].

The issues of accessibility, parity/ equality of opportunities and quality haunt the current educational system. Thus the implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan must be seen in this back-ground and recommendations for enhancing the avenues of its implementation must necessarily take into consideration, the overall political, social, academic milieu as a whole [8].

Most of the teacher feels that the disabled children in the normal class are the burden. Students they have not the efficient ability to perform equally with the normal students. Teachers feel guilty, and frustration due to the poor adaptation and accommodation in general classroom [1].

This study attempts to investigate primary school teacher's awareness towards inclusive education and special education.

2. Aim of the study

This study attempts to investigate primary and elementary school teachers' awareness towards the inclusion of students with special needs.

3. Methodology

3.1 Type of Research

The researcher used the descriptive research type. This type of research analyzes the current status of problem. Survey type method used for data collection.

3.2 Population of the Study

The primary and elementary schools from three districts Gujranwala, Gujrat and Hafizabad, were selected as population of this study. The distribution of population characteristics (urban and rural) of the study area shown are given in Table 1.

Table 1: population characteristics of the study area

Districts	Population			
	Urban		Rural	
	Th. Nos.	%	Th. Nos.	%
Gujranwala	1301	67.65	622	32.35
Hafizabad	566	27.25	1510	72.75
Gujrat	57	27.7	148	72.3

3.3 Sampling Technique

Random sampling technique was used for sample selection. Randomly select 10 teachers and head teachers from every school.

3.4 Sample Size

300 teachers selected as sample size male and female teacher's ratio is 60% and 40%, respectively.

3.5 Research Instrument

Researcher used the questionnaire for collecting the data about awareness of general education teacher's regarding special education and inclusion of special children in general classroom. Researchers constructed the questionnaire after the extensive study of literature. Questions were closed ended.

It has three (3) parts; first part including teacher's profile, while second part including teacher's awareness about disabilities and their education, third part depicted teachers awareness about the inclusive education.

Part one of the questionnaire determines the demographic information of respondents (teachers). It consisted of the information about sex, age, degree held, years of teaching experience, specialization, and training in special education and experience in teaching students with disabilities.

Part two determines the awareness level of teachers about the disabilities and their education.

Part three covers awareness level about inclusive education from the general education teachers at primary level.

Generally, questions are related to the teacher's awareness regarding disability characteristics, awareness about special education, and awareness regarding inclusive education and their feelings about special and inclusive education. Researcher divide the age groups in different slots e.g. 25-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55. Researcher made three categories according to education level of teachers, Intermediate, Bachelor, Masters and above degrees (with teaching diplomas).

Two points like scale is use for respondent selection:

- Agree 1
- Disagree 2

3.6 Validation of the research instrument

For the validation of the research instrument researcher get the experts opinion. After the experts review questionnaire validate for research. Reliability of instrument has cornbach alpha value is 0.75.

3.7 Pilot study

Researcher was selecting the 7 schools for pilot testing. Sample of the pilot study were the 50 teacher's male and female both. The pilot study results were show the consistency of the results reliability of the instrument.

3.8 Procedure of Data Collection

Initially researcher got the data about rural and urban population from districts census department. Researchers got the permission from the district education officer for visit and data collection. Researcher visited the primary and elementary schools in three districts in rural areas. Personally gather the data through questionnaires. For data analysis researcher used the SPSS for statistical analysis

4. Findings

Results of the study compact with the participant's profile it illustrate that the female respondents are more than the male respondents. Mostly respondents' ages are the 25-55 years old. Most of the respondent teachers have the bachelors' degree with teaching professional diploma. All teachers belong to the general education just few or other specialization areas or special education.

4.1 Age and Awareness of the Respondents

The results of awareness level with special and inclusive education for different age slots are illustrated in Figure 1. The results depicted that as the awareness level in percent decreases with increase in age. It noticed that awareness with special education far better than the inclusive education. Figure 1 showed highest and lowest awareness level of both education concepts (special and inclusive) in age groups 25-30 and 51-55 years, respectively.

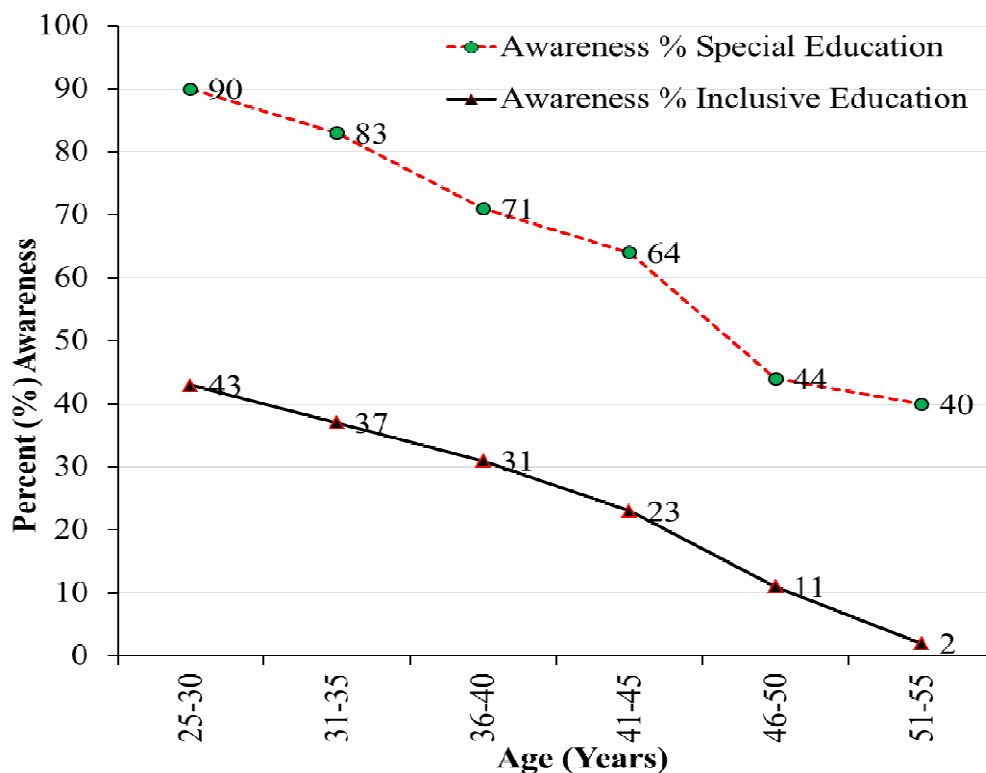


Figure 2: Variation of Awareness of special and inclusive education with comparison of age (years).

4.2 Education matters awareness

Education also plays an important role in the awareness level of respondents. Three categories divided by the researcher regarding education levels Intermediate, Bachelors, Masters and above (with teaching diplomas). Results depicted that respondent with intermediate, bachelors, masters and above shows 26%, 40% and 70%, respectively, awareness level about special education as well as inclusive education. There is significance difference of awareness level between the education of intermediate and bachelors (14%), intermediate and masters and above level (44%) while bachelors and mater and above (30%).

4.3 Respondents Experience with special need students

Teachers from the general education set up. 80% of the respondents have no experience teaching students with disabilities in classroom. 100% teachers have not attended any training in special education for teaching special children.

4.4 Teacher's Awareness about Classroom Practices

Less than 25 percent respondents know the little information about the classroom practices about inclusive classroom with special needs students. Teachers perceive that their professional knowledge and skills were inadequate to effectively teach students with disabilities in regular schools. Their inability to accommodate the disabled students in mainstream classroom may such concerns like fear their normal students success rate may effected. Teachers who said about the inclusive classroom practices not get any training it's their personal innovative nature.

4.5 Awareness about Legislation

Respondent's awareness about the legislation of the disabled students like the national special education policy of Pakistan or the international commitments regarding inclusive education very restricted.

4.6 Inclusive classroom practices

Less than 25% respondents know the inclusive classroom practices. Teachers said that their professional knowledge not adequate for the teaching of special children.

5. Discussion

Researcher selects the rural areas primary and elementary schools teachers including male and female. In this study teacher's age education and their professional degrees also focused because these factors effect on the research results. Higher the education increases the awareness level about the special education as well as inclusive education. This may be associated with fact that the young age group completed their education from universities and it developed multidisciplinary thinking and learning approach in them. There is significance difference between the lower education level and the higher education level 26% and 70% respectively. Distance from the hub of education Lahore, for instance distance between Lahore and Gujranwala, Hafizabad and Gujarat 72, 112, and 122 Km, respectively, also depicts the different results regarding awareness level about special education and inclusive education. In some cases respondent even did not know about the education of disabled children. They ask question innocently "how they learn? They have the ability to learn in formal setting? How special education teachers tackle in classroom? What type of degree you got for management of special children? These are the common questions that researchers faced during data collection. It's surprising because our agenda of inclusive education not completed without the awareness of special education and inclusive education concept to the general education teachers especially rural primary school teachers. Overall all previous researches shows that the positive teachers attitude towards inclusive education. Current study not focused on their attitude but informal discussion about inclusive education with teachers they show their positive attitude towards inclusive education.

6. Recommendations of the study

Some recommendations given below:

- Government should provide the in-service in-depth short courses to the teachers for the awareness and practical knowledge about special education as well as inclusive education.
- Most of the teachers have professional teaching diplomas universities revise their curriculum and add the special education subject as compulsory content.
- General education teachers are the host in case of inclusive education so they should prepared to welcome the special need student in their general classrooms for this purpose provide the quality trainings regarding inclusive education.
- Special education department should play their role and arrange seminars and training workshops with the cooperation of general education department for the awareness of general education teachers focus

the rural areas.

- Stakeholders regarding policy making and the implementation of the policies should insure that the all teachers selected for schools have the skill to teach the diverse need students in the same set up.
- Every program that designed for the advocacy of the inclusive education special education stakeholders should invite as chief guest from the general education.

7. Conclusion

This study focused on the rural areas general education teachers' awareness about the inclusive education. Pakistan is the signatory of Salamanca statement and promotes the inclusive education agenda. General education teachers' awareness is the foot step towards inclusive education. Research findings showed that the teachers age effect on the awareness level regarding special and inclusive education. Young age group showed the strong awareness level about special and inclusive education compared to senior group. While, highest qualified respondents responded strongly with comparison of lower once for the awareness of both concepts of education. Mostly teachers showed that they have not teaching experience with special children. Respondents have poor knowledge about legislation of special and inclusive education.

Research findings show that poor situation in the rural areas even about the special education instead of inclusive education concept. Although the teachers' education is play main role about the awareness of inclusion. Teachers face the fear they have not enough knowledge to deal the disabled students. For this purpose awareness programs should be designed.

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