

Awareness on Inclusive Education among B.Ed. Student Teachers

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ABSTRACT The study aims to assess the awareness of inclusive education among B.Ed. student teachers. The researchers used a descriptive cross-sectional survey method. Three hundred and sixteen B.Ed. student teachers served as the sample for the study. 'Awareness towards Inclusive Education Questionnaire (AIEQ)' is employed to collect the data. The survey reveals there is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education concerning demographic variables like year of study, gender, locality, educational qualifications, learner's generation, type of management, and academic streams. There is a substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education among the B.Ed. student teachers concerning gender. The study reveals that the B.Ed. student teachers' awareness of inclusive education is just below the average. The study suggests that the teacher education curriculum must include a practicum based inclusive education component to the B.Ed. student teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The children have the right to education without discrimination of gender, color, caste, religion, language, etc. "Inclusive education signifies an arrangement of training wherein students with and without inability learn together and the process of teaching and learning is appropriately adjusted to meet the adapting needs of various sorts of children with special needs (RPWD Act 2016)". It targets giving quality training to typical children and children with special needs under a similar rooftop. MoNE (2020) indicated that inclusive education provides part-time special education classes or full-time education to children with special needs and their peers. It enables interacting with all backgrounds and types to attain their educational aims. Inclusive education is an arrangement of instruction where all kids from a given local area learn together in a similar neighborhood school, incorporating special needs or different disabilities. It is endeavors to make children with special requirements go to class.

The accomplishment of each learning program relies upon the nature of the instructors and their perspectives. An inclusive educational program perceives the schools' requirement to sort out individual dissimilarities of students. There is a need for adaptability to empower all the children to accomplish their objectives. Executing an inclusive plan would require various changes in the

current day showing practice, educational plan content, assessment strategies, and accessible assets at the school level. The objective of giving training on inclusive education would stay delicate. Assembling support from guardians, parents, the local area, and special education schools is necessary to provide inclusive education. Presently, there is a developing pattern to get away from the special education schools following the 'Inclusive Education' model for training children with special needs (Rouse 2000). The teachers believe in identifying children's study behavior, removing difficulties, and making an easy education setting (Spencer 2011). The mutual development of the instructors, specific way, the study procedures in schools and classrooms are valuable (Lewis 2015).

Inclusive Education and Teacher Education

Teacher education programs have struggled to address the issue of teacher preparation for inclusive education. One of the main barriers is teachers' awareness and attitudes towards inclusive education (Sharma et al. 2012). Developing B. Ed. student teachers' understandings of inclusive education and building their ability to handle pedagogical challenges remains a challenge (Forlin 2012; Westwood 2018). An effective teacher education program is essential for the success of inclusive education. Lack of concerning reason-

able exposure to inclusive education in teacher education programs creates challenges (Sharma et al. 2013). B. Ed. student teachers' comprehension of the inclusive education system and building their capacity to deal with educational difficulties stay a test (Forlin et al. 2013; Westwood 2018). The teacher education bodies need to design courses to promote inclusive education among the teacher educators and how inclusive education is perceived by teacher educators (Anderson and Boyle 2015).

In the inclusive aspect, it is evident that the teachers should play a vital role in the children's success with special needs. Here the teaching experience plays a key role. The pre-service and in-service teachers should gain knowledge and awareness on inclusive education. They need to attend the training programs, workshops, seminars, and conferences on inclusive education. The student teachers and in-service teachers should be conscious of proficient awareness and the capability to teach children with special needs effectively (Sharma et al. 2006). Therefore, the teacher educators must possess the awareness, knowledge, and experience to train the student teachers to handle the unique needs effectively (Sherab et al. 2015).

Review of Related Literature

Many researchers studied the awareness and perceptions of B. Ed. student teachers on inclusive education. Zabeli and Gjelij (2020) indicated that the teachers' had a general perspective on inclusive education. Teachers' had less awareness and skills in handling the students with special needs. Comprehensive training programs are essential for teachers to execute inclusive education (Chhetri et al. 2020). A complete improvement of teachers' preparedness to increase inclusiveness in the learning setting would significantly improve the teachers' responses concerning accommodation for disabilities (Leifler 2020). Xu and Cooper (2020) made a study on awareness of individual dissimilarities of public school teachers' among special needs situations of China. The findings revealed that the general teachers could conceptualize individual differences among children with five types: identifying students' behavior and inspiration, learning outcomes, characteristics, capabilities, and family issues.

Goci and Gusho (2018) felt at ease to mingle with peers and concluded that inclusive education is developing. The teachers had to observe their success and issues concerning inclusive education continuously. Most of the student teachers knew how they have enhanced their awareness and could state how to approach inclusive education (Buli and Kamenopoulou 2017). A positive awareness level was found among teachers regarding integrated education and knew the needs of the disabilities. Eighty-eight percent of teachers know inclusive education to build an inclusive society (Gunjal 2017).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the awareness of inclusive education among B. Ed. student teachers.
2. To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in mean awareness scores on inclusive education among B. Ed. student teachers based on demographic variables such as year of study, gender, location, educational qualification, learner generation, management style, and academic stream.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the I year and II years B. Ed. student teachers.
2. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the male and female B. Ed. student teachers.
3. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the rural and urban B. Ed. student teachers.
4. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the undergraduate and post-graduate B. Ed. student teachers.
5. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the first-generation learner and other than first-generation learner B. Ed. student teachers.
6. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education among the government, govern-

ment-aided, and self-finance institutions B. Ed. student teachers.

7. There is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education among language, science, and social sciences B. Ed. student teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The main aim of the research is to find out the B. Ed. student teachers' awareness of inclusive education. The study employed the descriptive method, which focuses on an affluent and in-depth analysis of participants' awareness of inclusive education. A cross-sectional survey is conducted to collect the data about the study from seven B. Ed. colleges from Mahabubnagar District, Telangana state, India.

Research Tool

1. A general information sheet structured by the investigator is used to collect the demographic profile of the participants.
2. "Awareness towards Inclusive Education Questionnaire (AIEQ)" developed and validated by the investigator is employed to collecting the data from the participants. The draft version of the awareness towards inclusive education tool has 45 items. A panel of experts establishes the content validity of the research tool. The panel of experts scrutinized the items of the tool. Based on the experts' comments, the research tool is modified with 37 items. The researcher converted the research tool into Google forms to collect the data online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study conducted as a part of Ph.D program. A pilot study was conducted with a sample size of two hundred and fifty B.Ed. student teachers from Mahabubnagar district, Telangana state. The items were standardized based on Cron-

bach's alpha reliability statistics. The reliability value of the questionnaire is 0.88.

Sample of the Study

Three hundred and sixteen B. Ed. student teachers of seven education colleges of Mahabubnagar District, Telangana state served as the sample for the study. A cluster sampling technique was employed to select the sample for the study.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

The study's first objective is to assess the awareness of B. Ed. student teachers on inclusive education.

Table 1 indicates the mean (18.19) and SD (7.8) values of awareness on inclusive education among B. Ed. student teachers. The minimum and maximum possible scores on the awareness questionnaire are 0 and 37. The theoretical average of awareness on inclusive education questionnaire is 18.5. The variance of the awareness scale is 60.92. The mean awareness score of inclusive education of B. Ed. student teachers is below average that is 18.19. Hence, it is concluded that the B. Ed. student teachers' awareness of inclusive education is less than the average.

Testing of Hypotheses

To see if there is a statistically significant difference in mean awareness scores on inclusive education among B. Ed. student teachers are based on demographic variables such as year of study, gender, location, educational credentials, and learner generation. The t-test is employed, and the results are presented in Table 2. The F-test is used to find out the significant difference between management and academic stream, and the results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1: B. Ed student teacher's awareness on inclusive education

Variable	N	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
Awareness	316	0	18.50	37.00	18.19	7.80	60.92

Source: Author

Table 2: Mean, SD and 't' – scores on awareness on inclusive education among B. Ed student-teachers

<i>Dimensions</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Level of significance at 0.05</i>
Year of study	I year	98	17.71	6.71	0.735	Not significant
	II year	218	18.41	8.26		
Gender	Male	74	16.39	7.61	*2.288	*Significant
	Female	242	18.75	7.79		
Locality	Rural	223	17.89	8.25	1.088	Not significant
	Urban	93	18.94	6.58		
Educational qualifications	Under graduate	181	18.05	7.19	0.371	Not significant
	Post graduate	135	18.39	8.59		
Learner generation	First generation learner	221	17.89	7.60	1.075	Not significant
	Other than first generation learner	95	18.92	8.25		
		5				

Source: Author

The awareness of inclusive education scores of B. Ed. student teachers concerning the year of study is reflected in row 1 of Table 2. The data reveals that there is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the I year ($M=17.71$; $SD=6.71$) and II years ($M=18.41$; $SD=8.26$) B. Ed. student teachers. At the 0.05 level of significance, the 't' value is 0.735, which is smaller than the table value. The data reveals that the I year and II years B. Ed. student teachers did not differ in their level of awareness on inclusive education. Consequently, the framed null hypothesis is not accepted.

A look at row 2 of Table 2 reveals that there is a substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the male ($M=16.39$; $SD=7.61$) and female ($M=18.75$; $SD=7.79$) B. Ed. student teachers where 't' value is 2.288, which is greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. According to this finding, it is concluded that the male and female B. Ed. student teachers are differing in their awareness of inclusive education. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained.

The data given in row 3 of Table 2 reflects that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of rural ($M=17.89$; $SD=8.25$) and urban ($M=18.94$; $SD=6.58$) B. Ed. student teachers in their awareness on inclusive education where 't' value is 1.088, which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. So, it was concluded that rural and urban background B. Ed. student teachers did not differ in their awareness of inclusive education. Hence, the framed null hypothesis is accepted.

B. Ed. student teachers' awareness of inclusive education scores concerning educational qualification is revealed in row 4 of Table 2. The data indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of undergraduate ($M=18.05$; $SD=7.19$) and post-graduate ($M=18.39$; $SD=8.59$) B. Ed. student teachers where 't' value is 0.371, which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. The data indicated that the undergraduate and post-graduate B. Ed. student teachers did not differ in their level of awareness on inclusive education. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained.

Row 5 of Table 2 signify that there is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education between the first generation learner ($M=17.89$; $SD=7.60$) and other than first-generation learner ($M=18.92$; $SD=8.25$) B. Ed. student teachers where 't' value is 1.075, which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that the first-generation learner and other than first-generation learner B. Ed. student teachers did not vary in their level of awareness on inclusive education. Hence, the framed null hypothesis is accepted.

ANOVA is employed to assess the difference between the groups based on their mean differences. Table 3 indicates that the awareness level on inclusive education of B. Ed. student teachers of government ($N=104$), government-aided ($N=128$), and self-finance colleges ($N=84$). The between group's sum of the square is 176.881, df is 2, and mean square variance is 88.441. Within the group's sum of the square is 190.953, df is 313, and mean square variance is 60.744 where

Table 3: Awareness of B. Ed. student teachers on inclusive education with respect to type of management

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Source of variance</i>	<i>Sum of square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square variance</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Level of significance at 0.05</i>
Awareness of inclusive education	Between groups	176.881	2	88.441	1.45	Not significant
	Within groups	190.953	313	60.744		
	Total	191.835	315			

Source: Author

the F value is 1.45, which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the government, government-aided, and self-finance colleges B. Ed. student teachers did not differ in their awareness of inclusive education. There exists no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education among B. Ed. student teachers belonging to the government, government-aided, and self-financed B. Ed. colleges. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained.

Table 4 indicates with ANOVA that the awareness level on inclusive education of B. Ed. student teachers of languages (N=47), science (N=215), and social science (N=54). The between group's sum of the square is 53.576; df is 2, and mean square variance is 26.788. Within the groups' sum of the square is 191.258, df is 313, and mean square variance is 61.138, where the F value is 0.43, which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the languages, science, and social science subject background B. Ed. student teachers did not differ in their awareness of inclusive education. Hence, there is no substantial difference in the mean awareness ratings on inclusive education among B. Ed. student teachers belonging to languages, science, and social science subject's background. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings, B.Ed. student teachers have a lower-than-average awareness of in-

clusive education. The present study result differs from Gunjal's (2017) research findings, which was reported that eighty-eight percent of teachers had a positive awareness level in establishing integrated education and identifying the needs of the disabilities. The educator's knowledge, attitude, and awareness will impact inclusive education implementation (Burke and Sutherland 2004; Khan 2011). The educational colleges need to provide adequate knowledge and awareness to the B. Ed. student teachers about inclusive education during the B. Ed. program. The research results of Leifler (2020) supported that the teachers' willingness was initially essential in teaching and learning settings to enhance inclusive education. There is a possibility of the successful implementation of inclusive education by considering and accepting children's multiplicity (Freer2021). Awareness of the inclusive education dimension revealed that the primary school teachers' awareness is above average. It means there is a need to enhance the awareness among teachers (Sirem and Çatal 2022). Present study also revealed the same. There are many factors affecting the B. Ed. student teacher's awareness of inclusive education. Teacher education institutions should arrange special training programs on inclusive education for teacher educators. The troubles emerge from inflexible strategies and educational programs, unskilled teacher educators, low quality of teaching, lack of help from public organizations, and so on along these lines. Modification of educational framework is very

Table 4: Awareness of B. Ed. student teachers' on inclusive education with respect to academic stream

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Source of variance</i>	<i>Sum of square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square variance</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Level of significance at 0.05</i>
Awareness of inclusive education	Between groups	53.576	2	26.788	0.43	Not significant
	Within groups	191.258	313	61.138		
	Total	191.835	315			

Source: Author

much essential (Bhargava and Bhargava 2005). Inclusive education is an advantage to the children with special needs as well as it is necessary for the social and educational development of all students in schools (Kambouka et al. 2007). Most of the demographic variables are not significant because the study sample depends on the education colleges.

CONCLUSION

One of the significant factors that affect a student teacher's success is efficiency in their awareness towards inclusive education. The study provides an opportunity to know the awareness level of B. Ed. student teachers on inclusive education. The study reveals that the awareness level of B.Ed. student teachers on inclusive education is just below average, indicating that the student teachers exposure towards inclusive education is very limited. The B. Ed. student teachers should know more about the needs of children with special needs, should be able to organize and facilitate the unique needs in the regular classroom. The responsibility laid on the teacher education institutes to take necessary efforts to provide ample opportunities to the B. Ed. student teachers' to enhance their awareness and positive attitudes towards including the children with special needs with normal students in the inclusive classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study implies that the B. Ed. student teachers need to be provided with proper exhaustive training to ensure that they are well trained with adequate knowledge and teaching skills to support the children with special needs within the regular classroom. As inclusive teachers, the student teachers need to be aware of the children with special needs, types of disability, and their needs. Also, the B.Ed. student teacher should believe in the inclusive education system. The teacher education curriculum should include the practicum component of inclusive education, which might provide ample opportunities for the B.Ed. student teachers to have the proper exposure to inclusive education.

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