



CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE TEACHERS WHILE IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to identify challenges faced by female teachers while implementing inclusive education in schools. Teacher is the key part of the teaching and learning process, which faces many challenges to implement the inclusive education due to which they cannot play their roles effectively. This paper, based on a thorough review of the existing literature, critically analyses the challenges faced by female teachers. Since the passage of the persons with disabilities (PWD) Act in 1995 and subsequent implementation of various policies and programmes by the Indian government to enhance the participation of students with disabilities in regular schools, but there has been no remarkable growth of inclusive education. Such initiatives have placed new demands on schools, specially on teachers who have the major responsibility for implementing inclusion at the classroom level. Therefore it has become essential that regular school teachers must take additional efforts to include students with special needs in their classes. But unfortunately the absence of professional development of teachers is the key challenge to implement inclusive education in schools.

Keywords: Inclusion, disabilities, female teachers, challenges.



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Introduction:

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is the law guaranteeing the right for students with special needs to access a free, appropriate public education, just like any other child in the country. India undertook some key initiatives that focused on providing increased educational opportunities for students with disabilities in regular education settings. Most notably among them are the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995, National Trust Act 1999, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan 2001 and the Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities, 2005. Yet despite the integral role these initiatives have played in granting students with special needs access to education and inclusion opportunities, it remains hawed and underfunded. Complicated financial provisions continue to make it difficult for school districts to efficiently and effectively serve students with disabilities. Due to some of these problems, special education teachers are leaving the profession in droves. Therefore districts across the country are struggling both to retain qualified special education

teachers and to recruit them. Inclusion is the process of modifying the formal educational institutions in such a way that they may address and respond to the diverse needs of all children, though increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion from the main stream education. The exclusion of the students with special needs from the main stream institution may negatively affect their development. The current National Education Policy 2009 has laid great stress on bringing these children in the mainstream education system that may promote social, national cohesion.

Bortolo, (2010) reported that only 2% children with special needs attend schools while one third of the total are out of schools. According to Tahir and Khan (2010) about 20 percent of the world's poorest people are those who suffer from some sort of disabilities. Over 90% of the children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. The literacy rate of adults with disabilities is as low as three percent. Because of above facts it seems quite difficult to fulfill the dream of "Education For All" (EFA).

Review of Literature:

1. According Emam, Mohamed & Mohamad (2011), the teacher's need in-service and pre-service training to meet the challenges of inclusive education. It is an accepted fact that practice makes a man perfect and we learn by doing the things again and again. Though conscious efforts. The nature of the problems of the students with special needs is different as compared to the problems of the students in the mainstream schools. The teachers need greater patience to respond them and may also need to change the delivery pace for the students. Pre-service teacher education programme may ensure adequate scope in the curriculum on the inclusive education approach. The continuing, professional development is essential to meet the challenges in inclusive education.
2. Kilngner, et al...(1998) concluded that inclusive education is expensive because it needs full time support and one-on-one instruction from highly trained special education teachers to make it a success.
3. According to Bartolo (2010), head teachers think that the success of the inclusive education depends not only on the training of teachers but also required holistic changes in the overall environment of the school. It may include trained teachers, trained support staff, accessible infrastructures and accessible teaching/learning aids, curriculum adjustments, and modified assessment practices. According to Lilian & Sandy (2010), there are certain barriers which halt the movement of inclusive education. These barriers include higher level of socio-economic diversity,

discriminatory negative attitude, inflexible curriculum, communication problems, inaccessible and unsafe environment, inadequate support services, lack of parental involvement and trained human resources.

4. This reflects that before introducing inclusive education, the teachers should be appropriately trained and motivated. School based mentoring through teacher collaboration, learning and self-reflecting may make the inclusion of students with disabilities easier because it enhances the learning, knowledge, skills, wisdom and insight of the teacher in an untraditional way (Norwich and Nash, 2011; Zenija, 2011)
5. According to Yasmee, Minto & Khan (2010), at an operational level, inadequate infrastructure, limited learning materials and teaching skills coupled with insufficient clinical service support leads to the exclusion of students with disabilities from the mainstream system. Moreover poverty, disability, conflict and lack of supporting policy frameworks are also some of the key contributing factors to exclusion.

Challenges Faced by Female Teachers While Implementing Inclusive Education in Schools

1. **Lack of Professional Development to fulfill teacher's needs:** Education sector is a very dynamic industry. A good teacher needs to be constantly updated with the best practices practiced across the world. It has been observed that teachers who are not professional sound and upgraded are not able to cope with the different changes and challenges in the society, country and the world at large. Therefore effective teachers need to be effective learners as well. However the professional development of teachers has not been given any proper attention to meet their needs to address the challenging behavior in inclusive classroom. This reflects that before introducing inclusive education, the teachers should be appropriately trained and motivated. To get the adequate knowledge about the fundamental aspects of human body special education must be compulsory B Ed. level
2. **Lack of Skill In Modifying the curriculum to the needs of children with disabilities:** When the curriculum is developed, teachers role is that of only implementer. Regular teachers as well as special teachers contribute towards the process of curriculum development and evaluation neither they are provided with refreshers courses to teach updated syllabus. Sometimes children with special needs require specific syllabus accordingly, which is not taken into consideration for successful inclusive education. So it becomes quite difficult for teachers to fulfill the exceptions of each and every child. This ultimately affects their own performance as

well as the entire teaching and learning process in inclusive classrooms. This creates an environment of confusion, difficulty, fatigue and lack of understanding both on the part of teachers and students. Curriculum has to be modified and designed in order to meet the needs of students with special needs (Mentis et al.,2005; Smith et al.,2005).

3. **Lack of Funding:** Funding is the major factor to the practice of inclusion. Teaching children with disabilities in general education classrooms takes specialists and additional classrooms to support student needs. Many schools don't have additional money to provide coordinating services and offering individual supports to children. Therefore regular class teacher hinder their ongoing professional development with the help of special assistant. They cannot update themselves on the best practices. However, Cortiella (2009) asserts that a major constraint is serious shortage of educational resources, lack of schools, inadequate facilities and lack of teachers and shortage of professionally trained qualified staff, lack of modern instructional materials. Inadequate infrastructure facilities, inadequate salary and job security, inadequate facilities in organizing special sports and cultural activities. There has been shortage of resources like classrooms, desks, textbooks, such as talking books and Braille machines for the blind and classrooms constructed using ramps to facilitate the movements of students with physical disabilities, shortage of assistive technology. For special students such as large prints, on screen reading, talking calculators, etc.,

Though teachers have the skill of teaching in inclusive classroom, they cannot utilize their knowledge and skills in the fullest due to the major mentioned barriers. Thus it becomes the obstacle for implementing the inclusive education in practice.

4. **Teachers Negative Attitudes:** According to Boumgart, Doyle and Giangreco (1995), teachers who feel unprepared tend to feel overwhelmed to be responsible for accommodating special need students and assumed the special education teacher to take the responsibility.

It is found that teachers who were educated many years ago, with years of experience, demonstrated negative attitude towards inclusion because of lack of upgraded knowledge about inclusion.

It seems that the presence of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom has increased the instructional load of the regular education teacher (Beime, Daane and Latham, 2000)

Another reason teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion is due to the fact they feel unprepared to teach the students with special needs (Beime, Daane and Latham, 2000)

As regular school teachers are not prepared to teach students with special needs. Because of lack of knowledge, about the inclusion the regular teachers don't have confidence specially in the area of curriculum adaptation.

Teacher's negative perceptions of inclusion may be because of insufficient training and lack of knowledge in special education (Synder, 1999)

Inclusive education is not feasible because of various factors such as large class size, vast curriculum content, vigil time frame work, vigil curriculum, lack of training to deal with the handicapped population. Due to which regular teachers show negative attitude towards inclusion.

5. **Heavy Work Load:** In the majority of schools, there is lack of special educators, specialists, trained teachers, teaching staff. This over burdens other teachers in the school.

Jones et al., (2002), found that teachers saw their workload increasing during the inclusion of students with disabilities in to their classroom because they viewed the academic needs of these students as different in quantity and quality as the general education students.

It gives additional workload to the regular teachers. Some teachers believe that some students with disabilities neither gain a lot themselves academically nor socially from inclusion. Teachers don't have extra time to prepare themselves to teach the special student in regular classrooms, as they have less time to prepare their daily lessons.

Teaching children with special needs clearly takes a lot of commitment. It means teacher needs more planning and preparation to meet the individual needs according to one's ability. A study carried out by Male and May (1997) on primary school teachers in England showed that regular classroom teachers spent around 60-70 hours per week working at school to meet the needs of children with special needs. As a result many teachers were stressed eventually burnt out.

However Prochnow, Kearney and Caroll- Lind (2000) state that not all children with special needs required additional work from the teachers and it depends on the type of disability. He further elaborated that different disability level s gave different levels of exhaustion for teachers trying to meet children's needs.

6. **Large Class Size:** The children with special needs required individual attention, which is hardly impossible in inclusive classrooms because of large enrollment in the classrooms. So teaching in an inclusive classrooms become challenging. The issue of the large class size has also contributed to the excess amount of work teachers must do to meet the needs of every student. Prochoow et., al. (2000) stated that if the number of children with special needs in one class is more than five then the class teacher is under pressure to plan and prepare for each individual student. The teacher would not find enough time to prepare work for the children with special needs as well as the other regular children.

Disproportionate ratio of learner to teacher prevents teachers from developing close relationship with the students. Ultimately the progress in the teaching –learning process is hindered as teachers are unable to assist the learners who need more attention.

Teachers have to face behavior problems of children due to overcrowded classrooms with limited equipments, shortage of instructional materials, inflexible curriculum. When the teacher is busy with the slow learners, the gifted learners become bored and start making noise. Then again it becomes challenging to manage behavior in the classroom. For the successful inclusion schools must have smaller class sizes.

7. **Lack of Collaboration:** For inclusion practice to be effectively implemented in the regular schools, the collaboration of the teachers, special education teachers, board trustees, parents and specialists such as school counselors, psychotherapists and occupational therapists is important. Such collaboration will help children with special needs to gain confidence and learn and develop good social relationships within the learning environment (Smith e. el.,)

The attitudes, stress and workload of teachers to accommodate children with special needs in the regular classroom can only change when there is collaborative support from other children, teachers, parents and other specialists. Workload can be shared and supported by everyone, which can make inclusion work effectively (Andrews and Lupart, 1993, Smith et. Al., 2004)

In actual scenario of schools, there is a server shortage of required personnel such as special education teachers, teacher aides, related service professionals. (speech and language therapist, physical and occupational therapist) and other school professionals (Shah 2005). In the absence of such key professionals, implementation of inclusive education is quiet difficult.

Due to absence of special educational personnel regular class teachers cannot be assisted by them to address children's special needs, which may be academic or social. Regular teachers cannot meet the needs of children with disabilities, due to lack of knowledge and skills.

For the successful implementation of inclusive education effective collaboration must be needed.

8. **Lack of Adequate Teacher Preparation:** Current graduates completing teacher education programs are included education of children with disabilities through one theory based subject without any practice or practical work. Such subjects are offered as optional subject and not compulsory leading to often with very poor enrolments. This situation perhaps indicates that within teacher education programmes, education of children with disabilities is not seen as the primary responsibility of the regular school teachers. A need to reform teacher education programmes to prepare teachers for inclusive education has been articulated both by researchers (Shormet., al. 2009: Mitchell and Desai) 2005: Singal :2015a, 2015b) and by international agencies (UNESCO,2005). However, there is not enough research or policy direction on how this can be achieved.

“Inclusive Education” subject should be compulsory in teacher education programme along with a lot of practice. Different models are used to prepare teachers' for inclusive education. Information about various aspects of inclusive education can be covered in a single subject (Sharma, 2012) or infused through a number of subjects in the programme(Loreman, 2010). Teacher education programmes should make an attempt to evaluate the impact of the training.

When changes are made in the programme to provide a clear emphasis on knowledge, skills and practice, this should result in a significant shift in new graduates, thinking about inclusion (Sharma,2012 : Sharma et al., 2013). New graduates should be prepared with their head (knowledge of inclusive education strategies), heart (belief that inclusive education is good for all) and hands (ability to teach all) to include all learners (Sharma,2011.; Shulman and Shulman, 2004)

Conclusion:

1. Female teachers are experiencing many challenges: Lack of teaching and learning materials or resources, environment which is not suitable for the learners with disabilities, which makes most of the schools inaccessible to learners with disabilities.

2. Lack of knowledge on the part of classroom teachers about learning difficulties, lack of skills in using specific instructional methods, lack of teaching practices, lack of teaching strategies are the main barriers to inclusion.
3. Attitude is the tendency of an individual indicating the level of his involvement as well as interest in certain tasks or things. Well balanced knowledge, skills and attitudes are the three powerful components for successful implementation of inclusive education.

Teachers have positive attitude towards inclusion when teachers have the knowledge and skills to persist with inclusive pedagogies. Because of updated knowledge younger teachers have more positive attitude than older teachers.

4. Due to larger class size teachers have to do greater work to address the problems of special needs of students on individual basis. This ultimately affects the attitude of teachers negatively towards inclusive education. The issue of large class size does not maintain the quality of one-on-one interaction between teachers and students with disabilities.
5. Most of the teachers are not trained in special education in preparation for inclusion in mainstream schools. Therefore teachers do not have knowledge, don't know the basic classroom management techniques, lack of teaching skills of handling learners with disabilities. This made them insecure and ineffective to their teaching. Hence lack of in-service training in inclusion is a disaster to teachers which will impede the effective implementation of the programme.
6. Time allocated for workshops on inclusive education are insufficient because inclusive education is a new programme which needs intensive training with lot of practical work. Inclusive education becomes stressful to teachers since they are not competent enough to teach in inclusive classrooms.
7. At college, during teacher education programme, inclusion is not compulsory part (subject) of their curriculum. And for optional subject of inclusion, teachers trainers have only theory without the practical work on the basis of regular practice. It is not enough to bring changes in their attitude and equip them with the skills to work in inclusive classrooms.
8. There are certain barriers which halt the movement of inclusive education. These barriers include higher level of socio economic diversity, inflexible curriculum, communication problems, inaccessible and unsafe environment and lack of parental involvement and trained human resources.

9. Unavailability of teaching and learning materials that would help accommodate the learners with disabilities are due to lack of funding. Therefore it becomes very difficult to apply their knowledge and skills while teaching the students in inclusive classroom.
10. Infrastructure of school buildings, toilets, play grounds, play materials, classrooms and building designs are not adopted to suit inclusive education.
11. There is no collaborative support from other children, teachers, parents and other specialists. This increases the negative attitude, stress and workload of teachers to accommodate children with special needs in the regular classroom.

Recommendations:

On the basis of the findings of this study it is suggested that the challenges faced by female teachers could be solved through the following ways:

1. Teacher training should be enhanced specially through in-service training of the classroom teacher.
2. Teachers must be given continuous long term in-service teacher training to update their knowledge, skills, techniques, strategies to inculcate positive attitude to work in inclusive education system.
3. Increased funding should be provided by the government, faith based organizations, donors, and other well wishers for successful implementation of inclusive education.
4. At least one course on inclusive education must be compulsory included in all future education studies to prepare competent teachers for the successful inclusion.
5. Research needs to be conducted to find out the relationship between knowledge and confidence of teachers teaching learners with disabilities in an inclusive classroom.
6. Needs of the special students should be considered at the planning phase of the construction of infrastructure of the school buildings.
7. The latest technology, instructional material should be available to meet the basis needs of special students.
8. The existing general curriculum should be modified to suit the needs of these needs.
9. The Government should come up with feasible education policies for inclusion programme and should take all the possible to improve and modify the existing

physical facilities to make sure they are barrier free and easily accessible to all learners.

10. There should be more communication between the regular and special educators; more professional collaboration should become an integral part of any educational program.

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