FOSTERING GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AWARENESS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: A REVIEW STUDY

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Abstract

The present study fosters general education teachers (GET) awareness on inclusive education (IE) for students with special education needs (SwSENs). Everyone has the right to an equal education, including students with SENs. However, when it came to the actual concept of IE, there was an obvious awareness gap between general education teachers with more and less experience; however, there was a knowledge gap regarding the legal requirements for IE, basic information about children with SENs, or the skills and competencies needed to implement IE. Access to education and learning opportunities is ensured for all students through IE, including those with SENs. A student is considered to have special educational needs when they require individualised support while learning. IE approaches include a wide range of practices, such as adapted classrooms settings, inclusive teaching strategies, and providing students with the same assistance and instruction as their peers in a regular grade-level classroom. Everyone should have access to IE's benefits, especially students with SENs. It may be necessary for various experts to work together to address potential further issues, such as exploitation. To instil in young minds the values of optimism and tolerance, IE is essential in the fight for a world devoid of discrimination. Improving children's complete education is IE's primary focus, along with its practical benefits and drawbacks. We actively encourage diversity awareness and appreciation at IE to foster acceptance, tolerance, and understanding among our varied student body. Even with its advantages, IE may face educational equity and diversity obstacles. Despite all the challenges, GET will successfully implement IE for students with SENs.

Keywords: Fostering, General Education Teachers, Awareness, Inclusive Education, Students with Special Educational Needs, and Review Study.

Introduction

Special education was one of the first fields to use IE. There was a time when mainstream schools saw special education programmes for children with SENs as adjuncts to their regular curriculum (Pingle & Garg, 2015; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Essential features of IE that differ from earlier, less cohesive approaches to education include developing learning plans for each student and organising them into skill-based groups (Abbas & Naz, 2016). It is possible that GETs, with their knowledge of IE, can create a classroom that is inclusive of students with SEN. The belief that all students should have equal access to and participation in mainstream classes is foundational to IE. It would benefit GETs to educate themselves on IE, what it means to provide an IE, and how to cater to their students' needs. The extent to which teachers have enough awareness of IE has been the subject of extensive study by scholars from across the globe. For GET to help all students, particularly those with SEN, attain their maximum potential, it is essential to understand IE's principles and values thoroughly. Since each child is different, GET must adapt its services to meet their physical, social, emotional, and psychological needs. This understanding allows teachers to modify their teachings according

54

to their students' SENs' requirements and equip them with the necessary tools for success. Srivastava et al. (2017) also found that teachers lacked awareness and skills in IE and were ill-equipped to teach students with SENs. According to Zagona et al. (2017), teachers did not grasp IE well. GET is crucial for educating young people about the importance of diversity and inclusion. By demonstrating inclusive activities, valuing diversity, and encouraging empathy and understanding, GET hopes to create an inclusive school environment.

An essential principle of IE is promoting and embracing persons with diverse talents (Korkmaz, 2011). In a perfect, prejudice-free society, IE thinks everyone should have a shot at making it big. Scholarly works such as those of Pingle and Garg (2015) and Thakur and Abbas (2017) contend that constructing specialist schools for children with SENs opposes the equity-based IE paradigm. Maria (2013) also demonstrated that teachers needed clarification on IE and needed to learn how to implement it in the classroom. Respondents also showed a severely lacking comprehension of IE policies, curriculum, and instructional methods (Bai & Martin, 2015). According to Zagona, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017), all students, not just the highest performers, should have a fair chance to speak up and engage. GET should work together in real-life and online settings to improve inclusive practices. GET's academic support services can be more effective for students with SENs when they develop individualised educational plans, provide appropriate modifications, and give meaningful support. Yada et al. (2018) state that this approach is effective for all children, including those with SENs. To help GET learn more about IE and improve, providing them with opportunities for ongoing professional development is essential. The GET lecture, workshop, and seminar series welcomes students from many backgrounds and locations worldwide. Similarly, GET needs to spearhead IE and monitor policy, programme, and legislation changes to ensure that students with SENs can participate fully in mainstream classrooms.

55

Methodology

The data used in this study came from secondary sources of information. For secondary data, we scoured books, journals, and research papers. Several authors' concepts and works from the canons of academic and research are used in the study's methodology. A thorough literature review was performed to gather relevant data, research, and materials on IE. We searched for and studied scholarly articles, books, journals, and websites to learn about different IE plans and techniques. When researching national, state, or local policies and programmes, government websites, policy papers, educational reports, and other official publications are good places to start.

Objectives of the Study

To study the awareness of general education teachers towards inclusive education

Review of Literature

S. No	Authors	Research Design	Samples	Findings
1	Sirem O et al. (2023)	Descriptive Survey Method	128 Teachers	• The information was analysed with descriptive statistics. • Nurturing students' emotional and social abilities is essential for IE to flourish in the classroom, in addition to teachers having a generally optimistic outlook on the subject.

2	Dave, M. D. (2021	Survey Method	100 Primary Teachers	• The study's findings on private educators' awareness of IE were more upbeat than primary government educators. • Similar levels of IE awareness can be seen among male and female educators.
3	Amjad, A. I, et al (2020)	Descriptive Survey Method	175 Teachers	• In the wake of the findings, a public education and awareness campaign on a national scale might be launched. • There is now an official IE policy, and educators have been urged to attend workshops and seminars on IE. • There was also the possibility that individuals' interpretations of their survey outcomes needed to be more accurate.
4	Senarath, S. (2019)	Sequential Descriptive Mixed Method	102 Elementary School Teachers	• The finding showed that to prevent psychological problems and advance IE practices, better special education teacher training programs and in-service primary teacher training, with special teaching methods included in the teacher guidebook, are required to update their knowledge annually. • Teachers need easier access to awareness programs about developmental disabilities in inclusive classrooms to be successfully implemented.
5	Garbutt G.W. (2018)	Mixed-Method Approach	351 Teachers	• The finding suggests that schools provide teachers with Learning Disability (LD) training and that the Ministry of Education changes its curricula to accommodate LD students better. • Despite educators' familiarity with LD, the study indicated that elementary schools could not successfully integrate pupils with the disorder because of a lack of administrative support.
6	Maheshwari P. et al. (2015)	Survey Method	60 Teachers of Primary Schools	• Training mainstream teachers to understand and accommodate students with various needs is essential. • The number of SWDs included in general education classes is inversely related to their teachers' attitudes.

56

The Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a method of teaching that aims to include students with SENs in mainstream classrooms by combining typically developing children with those with a range of SENs. Students with SENs participate in all aspects of classroom life, like their typically developing classmates. Beginning with an examination of its historical roots in more significant

civil rights movements in democracies, this paper goes on to offer a concise summary of the various definitions of inclusion. Inclusion might mean diverse things to different people, but it generally refers to how accepting and helpful a school or community is towards students with disabilities. These adolescents have integrated into the mainstream school's social and academic norms, asserts Farrel (2004). Next, we'll discuss the difficulties of creating an inclusive classroom and suggest how educators may foster such a setting so all students can thrive. With an inclusive learning design that removes the risk of exclusion, all children can receive an inviting, supportive, and enriching education. We found a solution to the challenge of better educating these youngsters by listening to their ideas. When IE is robust, every student has a fair chance to contribute to the class discussion.

A child's individuality can be defined by factors such as their size, race/ethnicity, gender, and any mental or physical disabilities they may have. It is essential to create an inclusive classroom where every child feels welcome since every child has a story to share and a unique perspective to offer. More importantly than catering to people with disabilities, we must ensure all users can use the systems (UNICEF, 2009). Since it broadens the exposure of children with SEN to new ideas, schools can better welcome a diverse student body. Schools will make a concerted effort to get community leaders, parents, and educators to accept students with SENs from all walks of life. An inclusive classroom that IE designs can help all children, especially those with special needs. In a welcoming classroom, students of different backgrounds can learn from one another. When students with SENs are to be afforded equal educational opportunities, IE is a prerequisite. If we can improve students' academic performance, it will affect their lives in general and make them more prepared for the future. The world may be different when children don't get the education they do. By putting money into our children's education, we may influence their personality, skills, and capacity to form relationships with people from diverse backgrounds. Another crucial skill for children to acquire is the ability to put classroom knowledge into practice in real-world scenarios. Children must have access to IE because it enhances their learning capacity and encourages them to communicate what they have learnt. Officials in India's government are pushing for schools to be friendlier to international students. Since ancient times, integrity and uniqueness have been prized in India. To this day, many are willing to shell out extra cash to make sure every child feels welcome. All students, regardless of disability, participate in their regularly scheduled classroom lessons as part of IE.

Personalised learning considers each student's unique characteristics, interests, aptitudes, and abilities to design lessons tailored to their needs. More and more students are opting to use IE in today's schools. Implementing inclusion without sufficient general education preparation will lead to disappointing outcomes. Mobilising and involving the community is essential for building capacity for IE at the grassroots level (Makwana, G, 2022). Although they all take the same classes, every student at IE is different. More educational possibilities will be available to students from historically disadvantaged communities, including those with impairments. No matter their developmental level, every kid in our classroom, including those with disabilities, is treated with the utmost respect and decency. Every one of my pupils has the inherent ability to make a big difference in our classroom and the world. A vital component of the movement's strategy is to enact legislation mandating that schools offer children the most accommodating environment possible. According to Alquraini and Gut (2012), for students with disabilities to fully engage in mainstream courses, they should actively seek opportunities to integrate with their typically developing classmates. Our ultimate aim is to ensure that every student at IE has an equal opportunity to get a quality education. Eliminating institutional prejudice and other obstacles to IE and supporting policies and resources that enhance IE in all schools should be prioritised. No child should be denied access to a quality education because of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability. We will only

57

stop once we have eliminated all barriers. Every person should be able to feel accepted and appreciated, and that is our goal here at IE.

Role of General Education Teachers in Promoting Inclusive Education

General education teachers foster an inclusive environment for learning where all students, including those with special educational needs, are welcome. As general education teachers, we consider it our moral obligation to create learning environments where students of many identities and backgrounds can freely express themselves. They set an example of inclusive practice by encouraging healthy peer relationships and ensuring every child feels accepted. What we mean when we talk about inclusion in education is trying to cater to the requirements of children who are different from one another in terms of age, ability, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. Personalised lessons are necessary for these children due to the barriers they face in mainstream education. It is more challenging to implement inclusion criteria when GET are not given the resources they need to create welcoming educational environments for all students. All children should feel comfortable and welcome in classrooms—a concise synopsis.

Regarding increasing engagement and decreasing underachievement, teachers are especially crucial for students with difficulty in school. Redefining the roles and responsibilities of GETs is an essential step towards constructing inclusive schools. Improving IE will require preparing teachers to work with students who have special educational needs, developing and implementing an effective curriculum, and providing the necessary support to these pupils. The research concludes that teacher preparation programmes are crucial in moulding GET's character traits to succeed in the classroom (Abrol, M, 2023). Teachers in traditional classrooms work hard to change their students' perspectives about disability and diversity. Regardless of their ability, all children learn the value of friendships and group activities and the principles of acceptance, empathy, and tolerance. In their classrooms and beyond, general education teachers fight for more welcoming rules and procedures. Together with parents, administrators, and colleagues, they promote IE's advantages, fight for disabled children's rights, and develop inclusive policies and procedures. To hone their IE abilities, teachers in traditional schools participate in ongoing education. It is a part of their professional development to attend training sessions, conferences, and seminars that cover topics including inclusive teaching techniques, disability awareness, and practical strategies for helping students from varied backgrounds. By taking on these responsibilities, general education teachers may help spread awareness about inclusive education and build more welcoming classrooms for all students.

IE is a strategy for teaching students with special needs that considers and makes allowances for their wide range of skills, ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, and languages. Educators should have sufficient resources when dealing with children with SENs. When training students, some of whom may have several SENs and various needs, teachers encounter the challenge of IE. Redefining our educator role can help us overcome difficulties in building truly inclusive classrooms. It is more important than ever to ensure that all children, regardless of their family's financial situation, have equal opportunity for a high-quality education. Embracing and cherishing every kid's unique qualities, IE works towards creating a classroom where every student has an equal chance to succeed academically regardless of socioeconomic status or physical abilities. Teachers see IE as essential in promoting diversity and equity in the classroom. Improving the implementation of IE and contributing to more equitable educational systems can be achieved by understanding educators' experiences, concerns, and opinions (Ehsan, 2018). Adapting pedagogy, course material, and evaluation strategies allows general education teachers to serve their students from various backgrounds better. They ensure that

58

every student has a fair chance to achieve academically by using tactics including scaffolded support, personalised instruction, and flexible grouping. Helping students with SENs and other special needs involves general education teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and other particular education specialists. Their responsibilities include:

- Participating in team meetings.
- Helping create individualised education plans.
- Making any required adjustments or accommodations.

General Education Teachers' Awareness on Inclusive Education

How well general education teachers understand IE has been the subject of a great deal of study, both domestically and internationally. According to the research, teachers need to have the training or education to teach students with SENs, according to the study adequately. By holding seminars and workshops at the school level, we can promote awareness of the epidemic and boost GET's understanding of IE. By incorporating it into standard teacher education programmes, we can ensure aspiring teachers understand IE well. It appears that GET is familiar with IE and its related problems. They saw the relevance of IE but were bewildered by the myriad national and international IE policies. Integrating IE into GET courses would significantly improve students' topic understanding and comprehension. The social importance, definition, and difficulties of IE and associated national and international policies and projects were also inadequately covered. Teachers are unaware of IE and fail to recognise when their understanding differs from what they teach, according to Maria (2013), who references research. The outcomes of this study are consistent with those of Bai and Martin (2015), who also discovered that teachers lacked knowledge of the principles, ideas, and pedagogical approaches of IE. Primary school teachers' levels of IE awareness do not differ significantly by gender, geography, level of professional qualification, or age. When comparing the two groups' levels of familiarity with IE as an idea, a clear knowledge gap emerged; however, no such gap emerged when discussing the IE's legal requirements, basic facts about students with SENs, or the competencies and skills needed to implement IE. The present study's authors drew certain conclusions and suggested directions for future research based on these results (Jena, S. S., & Mishra, S. 2018). A primary focus of this study, similar to that of Forlin's (2013) study of Western Australia, was the responsibility of teachers. Concerned that they lacked the expertise necessary to assist students with SENs or even identify when one existed, they sought out training in special education. Pingle and Garg (2015) found that instructors' understanding of IE significantly improved after engaging in their experimental study. The poll found that educators were aware of the significance of IE but had only a general idea of the challenges associated with putting it into practice. It may be inferred from this that there were no differences in IE awareness among teachers based on gender or region. Raising general education teachers' awareness of IE is the surest approach to help all students feel appreciated, respected, and supported as they navigate their educational journey.

Conclusions

Education is vital in enabling individuals to achieve their needs, overcome challenges, and gain agency. This puts the onus squarely on the shoulders of educators, who are essential in accommodating students with SENs through implementing IE. By honouring the rights, regulations, and policies that impact children with SENs, we can create a classroom environment that is more inclusive for everyone. To better assist students with SENs, general education teachers in mainstream classrooms should be aware of the challenges of working in inclusive settings, such as a lack of qualified personnel, an inability to encourage partnerships between general and special education teachers, and, most importantly, an inadequate amount of knowledge and training on the topic. According to the study, general education teachers

59

need more understanding of IE and rarely attend IE-related professional development opportunities. As per the outcomes of the factor analysis, the level of comprehension among general education teachers on IE and its related ideas and difficulties was modest. They have a basic familiarity with IE but a far more limited grasp of the numerous national and international IE policies. All students, especially those from impoverished families, should have equitable access to school opportunities for children with SENs, and this study's findings will help legislators craft laws and regulations to make that happen. General education teachers' awareness on IE could be expanded by seminars and workshops organised at various levels, such as school, tehsil, district, interim, and national. Print and internet media can run ads highlighting IE's strengths and promising future. Our nation's future educators will be ready to take on their professions with the help of IE. Those working in private schools might be unable to use the study's findings because it only covered public school teachers. The data comes from individuals with advanced degrees. Therefore, the results may not reflect general education teachers' perspectives. Since the information was gathered through surveys, the opinions shared could not be entirely accurate. Some general education teachers may not have answered the questions entirely forthrightly, which could lead to inaccurate outcomes.

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61