Perspectives of University Teachers' Regarding Inclusion of Students with Special Needs at University Level

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ABSTRACT

Several initiatives have been taken to provide inclusive education at elementary level and secondary level but no significant step has been taken to create inclusive education at higher level. After successful implementation of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) it is high time to ensure inclusive education at higher level of education. Being positioned at the top of the educational pyramid, universities role is crucial to make inclusive education successful. One of the most significant factors regarding inclusion of students with special needs is teachers' perspectives regarding inclusive education of at university level. This paper has used the descriptive method to study the perspectives of thirty six university teachers regarding the inclusion at university level. The findings of the study indicate that teachers have positive perspectives regarding inclusive education of students with special needs at university level.

Keywords: Inclusive education, opinion, University teachers

The University occupies a place of overwhelming importance in educational system. Inclusive learning environments are reflections of the change in societal values and philosophy. Universities are the living embodiment of a society's underlying philosophy. Being positioned at the top of the educational pyramid, university teachers play crucial role to make inclusive education successful. University is the reservoir of the best equipped human resources and physical resources in any country having an obligation to help develop other levels of education also.

The UNESCO, Salamanca statement and framework on Special Needs Education 1994, states that, "Regular University with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive community and achieving education for all." The most important requirement for inclusion is that the teachers accept the philosophy of inclusion with responsibility for creating education system in which all the students can learn equally. According to Bbender, Vail & Scott (1995), "Teachers' views about inclusion have been found to be a crucial factor that impacts the implementation of the inclusion for children with disabilities." Education including higher education is the right of every person whether able bodied or disabled. "Inclusive education ensures physical access of young persons with disabilities (18 plus age group) in all colleges and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provision of universal design in buildings and providing supports in transportation" (AIEYD, 2005).

The concept of 'inclusive education' comprises all students from different backgrounds irrespective of caste, creed, sex, language, abilities or disabilities. However, for the purposes of this study, 'the term inclusion refers to including students with disabilities in regular classrooms with required additional supports.

NEED OF THE STUDY

After implementation of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan which aims to educate all students including students with special needs at elementary level in the inclusive environment. Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was initiated in the year 2009 to provide secondary level education to students with special needs in inclusive setting.

After provision of secondary level education the next step would be to ensure inclusive education at higher level in which university has an important role to play. But no significant initiatives have been taken to include student with special needs at university level. One of the greatest barriers to the development of inclusion is most teachers do not have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to carry out this work (Forlin 2001). The success of inclusion depends upon many factors, including attitudes of the educators and the quality of instructions that they offer to their students (Leyser & Tappendrof, 2001). Inclusive philosophy demands appreciation and support for diversity in which every student needs to be valued as unique participant. Teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, their acceptance of students with disabilities, their behavior towards these students are of utmost importance for making inclusive education successful at university level.

After Extensive and intensive review, it is found that not even a single study has been conducted in the recent past in local context to study the perspectives of university teacher's regarding Inclusion of Students with Special needs at University level. Therefore, present study emanates.

Statement of the problem

The problem of the study has been stated as follows:

❒ "Perspectives of University Teacher's regarding Inclusion of Students with Special needs at University level"

Objective of study:

To study the perspectives of university teachers' regarding inclusion of students with Special needs at university level

Method of the Study: Descriptive survey method has been used to study the perspectives of university teachers' regarding inclusion of students with special needs at university level

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. 36 teachers of different faculty of Uttar Pradesh Viklang Uddhar Dr. Shakuntala Misra University constitute the sample for this present study.

Tool

In order to find out the perspectives of the University teachers towards inclusive education a three point scale was developed by the researchers. It contains 33 items covering several aspects of inclusive philosophy to be implemented at university level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings related to objectives of the study have been given below in table 1.

Interpretation & Discussion

The perspectives of university teachers' regarding inclusion of students with special needs at university level is reflected in the above table. It is clear that the majority of the respondents (34 out of 36 i.e. 94%) and (30 out of 36 i.e. 83%) believed that inclusive philosophy was capable to provide education to all and was possible at university level respectively. 35 out of 36 i.e. 97% respondents agreed that inclusion was part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society.

On being asked whether inclusive education helps in overall development an overwhelming majority of respondents' 86% agreed that inclusive education helps in overall development of the students followed by only 4 i.e. 11% teachers respondents not agreeing with this viewpoint while 1 i.e. 3% teacher were not sure about it. Only 24 (66%) respondents agreed that inclusive environment contributed in more rapid academic skills in comparison to special school. Providing equal opportunity to all is the basic characteristics of inclusive education and majority of respondents agreed with it. 35 out of 36 i.e. 97% respondents agreed that inclusive education provides equal opportunity to all students and only 1 i.e. 3% gave negative response. Inclusion is about respecting and accepting the differences,

Table 1

Sl. No.	Items (Sample Size=36)	Response					
		Yes		No		Ind	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Inclusive philosophy is capable to provide education to all	34	94	0	0	2	6
2	Inclusive education is possible at university level also	30	83	2	6	4	11
3	Inclusion is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society	35	97	0	0	1	3
4	Inclusive education is the most cost effective system	28	78	6	17	2	6
5	Inclusive education helps in overall development of students	31	86	4	11	1	3
6	More rapid development of academic skills in inclusive class	24	66	6	17	6	17
7	Inclusive education provides equal opportunity to all students	35	97	1	3	0	0
8	Inclusion foster acceptance of differences	22	61	14	39	0	0
9	Inclusion increases achievement of all	28	78	6	17	2	5
10	Inclusive education help to make identity in society	21	58	9	25	6	17
11	Inclusive education is capable to fulfill individual needs	29	81	7	19	0	0
12	Inclusive environment enhances the adjustment capacity of students	28	78	0	0	8	22
13	Inclusive education enhances the participation of all students in various activities	28	78	0	0	8	22
14	In regular classes more attention on students with special needs is harmful for normal student	8	22	20	56	8	22
15	Inclusion will require extensive teacher retraining	36	100	0	0	0	0
16	Inclusion of children with special needs can be beneficial for regular class children	29	81	0	0	7	25
17	Inclusive education increases interaction between normal and special students	34	94	2	6	0	0
18	Inclusion increases the interaction between general teacher and special teachers	34	94	2	6	0	0
19	Inclusion requires special training for in-service teachers	36	100	00	00	00	00
20	Inclusive education necessitates skills in teachers' adaptation in curriculum as per need of students	27	75	3	8	6	17
21	Inclusive education motivate to face challenges	25	69	4	11	7	20
22	It is difficult to manage classroom	20	56	16	44	0	0
23	Inclusion will require significant changes in regular classroom procedures	21	58	8	22	7	20
24	Inclusion promotes independence of students	21	58	6	17	9	25
25	Inclusion requires more cooperation from parents	14	39	10	28	12	33
26	Feel difficulty during teaching in inclusive class	24	67	8	22	4	11
27	Special class placement may have a negative effect on social and emotional development	23	64	0	0	13	36
28	Inclusive education motivates normal students to support special students.	21	58	8	22	7	20
29	Barrier free environment is must for inclusion	36	0	0	0	0	0
30	In inclusive classroom it is difficult to provide proper time to normal students	0	0	36	100	0	0
31	Quality research is difficult in inclusive university	19	53	8	22	9	25
32	Inclusion requires ability to make appropriate expectations for each student, regardless of the student's capabilities	28	78	4	11	4	11
33	Inclusion demands appropriate material, equipment or specialists	36	100	0	0	0	0

and 22 i.e. 61% respondents agreed that inclusion fosters acceptance of differences whereas 14 i.e. 39% reported it was not so. 28 out of 36 i.e. 78% respondents accepted that inclusion increased achievement of all whereas 6 (17%) did not accept this view point and 2 (5%) were indifferent toward this view point.

On being asked whether inclusive education help to make identity in society only 21 i.e. 58% respondents reported positively whereas 9 i.e. 25% reported negatively and 6 i.e. 17% reported of being not sure. 29 i.e. 81 % respondents agreed that inclusive education was capable to fulfill individual needs and 7 i.e. 19 % reported it was not so. 28 out of 36 i.e. 78% respondents stated that inclusive environment enhanced the adjustment capacity and participation in activities of all students whereas 8 i.e. 22% respondents reported it didn't. Inclusive education is criticized for offering more attention to special students which tends to be harmful for normal students whereas findings of this study shows that only 8 out of 36 i.e. 22% respondents reported that in regular classes more attention to students with special needs was harmful for normal students. Inclusive education requires teachers to accept the responsibility for creating inclusive schools for which trained teachers are necessary.

All the respondents agreed that inclusive education would requires extensive retraining of teacher as well in service teachers training. 29 out of 36 respondents stated that inclusion of special needs would be beneficial for normal students. 34 out of 36 respondents reported that inclusive education enhances interaction between normal and special students as well as general teachers and special teachers. Effective education system demands curriculum as per the needs of students. 27 out 36 i.e. 75% respondents agreed that inclusive education necessitated skills in teachers' adaptation in curriculum as per need of students followed by only 3 i.e. 8% and respondents reported that it didn't while 6 i.e. 17% not sure about it. 25 out of 36 i.e. 69% respondents stated that inclusive education motivated students to face challenges whereas 4 i.e. 11% and 7 i.e. 20% reported that it didn't and not sure respectively.

Only 20 out of 36 i.e. 56 % teachers said that managing inclusive class room was difficult whereas 16 i.e. 44% reported that it was not so. 21 i.e. 58 %

respondents reported that inclusion would require significant changes in regular classroom procedures while 8 i.e. 22% reported it was not and 7 i.e. 20 % were indifferent. On being asked whether inclusion promotes independence of students 21 i.e. 58% teachers' responded positively, 6 i.e. 17% teachers' responded negatively and 9 i.e. 25% responded were not sure.

Only 14 i.e. 39% respondents stated that inclusion required more cooperation from parents whereas 10 i.e. 28% reported that it didn't and 12 i.e. 33 % reported they didn't know. Only 8 (22%) teachers reported that they felt difficulty during teaching in inclusive class room whereas 24 (67%) reported they didn't and 4 (11%) showed indifference. Only 23 (64%) respondents stated that placement in special class might have a negative effect on social and emotional development whereas 13 respondents stated that they were not sure about it. On being asked whether inclusive education motivated normal students to support special students or not. 21 i.e. 58% teachers' responded positively, 8 i.e. 22 % teachers responded negatively and 7 i.e. 20% teachers were not sure about it. All 36 teachers were agreed that barrier free environment was must for inclusion. None of the teachers reported that in inclusive classroom it was difficult to provide proper time to normal students. 19 (53%) respondents revealed that quality research was difficult in inclusive university followed by 8 (22%) respondents reported there was no such problem while 9 (25%) were not sure about it. All the respondents reported that inclusion required ability to make appropriate expectations for each student regardless of the students' capabilities. All the respondents' agreed that appropriate material, equipment or specialists was must for making inclusion philosophy successful.

CONCLUSION

A quick summary of the study is that majority of the teachers have positive perspectives toward inclusive education of students with special needs at university level. An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that inclusive philosophy is capable not only to provide quality education to all but also to provides equal opportunity to all students. The most important fact is majority of teachers consider that inclusive education is possible

at university level also. Inclusive education is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society. Inclusive education is beneficial for normal students and it increases interaction between normal and special students as well as interaction between general teacher and special teachers. It is the most cost effective system. None of the teachers reveals that it is difficult to provide proper time to normal students in inclusive system of education.

However, findings of the study also reveal that facilities required to include students with special needs in general education system is not up to mark. There is urgent need to develop appropriate material, equipment or specialists, create barrier free environment, and arrange special training for in-service teachers and extensive retraining of teachers. Majority of teachers reported that quality research is difficult in inclusive university. It may be because of lack of facilities. Responses from the teachers show that few teachers also feel difficulty during teaching in inclusive class.

Conclusively the study shows that overwhelming majority of the teachers have positive perspectives regarding inclusive education at university level. But several steps have to be taken for inclusion of students at university level to make it successful.

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