



# ACCEPTING THE DIFFERENCES AND CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY: PROBLEMS CONFRONTED BY TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

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## *Abstract*

The present study traces the concept of inclusive education in schools in the Kerala context. This investigation was undertaken to study the problems faced by the secondary school teachers regarding different aspects of inclusive education. The data for the present investigation were collected from 200 secondary school teachers from Palakkad and Thrissur district of Kerala; with the help of self-developed questionnaire for secondary school teachers. The responses to open ended questions in the questionnaire were interpreted with the help of content-analysis technique. Although, it has been reflected by majority of secondary school teachers that inclusive education is a better alternate for educating special children as compared to special education, but certain problems have been highlighted by the teachers that are acting as hindrances in making inclusive education, a successful venture. The suggestions have also been formulated for making inclusive education more effective.

***Key word- Inclusive Education***

## **Inclusive education**

Inclusive education refers to the placement and education of children with disabilities in regular education class rooms with children of the same age who do not have disabilities.

## Introduction

The concept of inclusion has emerged from the ideas of providing equal opportunities to all children keeping in mind the diverse nature of their individual needs. The philosophy of inclusion holds that education must incorporate needed changes in the system to meet the needs of all children including differentially abled. But the educational experiences often become a nightmare for a student who is disabled. A person with a disability studying in mainstream educational institutions in Kerala experiences many difficulties in many areas-course content, staff, infrastructure facilities, environmental constraints, resources as well as the educational and examination process and soon.

Central and state governments have taken a number of initiatives to improve the enrollment, retention and achievement of children with disabilities. Many government-aided schools in the state have special classes and inclusive education for the special needs kids. IED (Inclusive Education for Disabled) resource teachers are provided to help such students. Government approved counselors assess the students and if diagnosed with a learning disability and IED resource teachers give special assistance to them. Special classes and separate teachers are made available to students with disabilities from primary class onwards. Children will also be given home-based training on other days. Teachers visit the houses of children with special needs and they are provided with home based education once a week.

This paper attempts to explain the problems and pressures faced by secondary school teachers in imparting education in inclusive settings. The suggestions forwarded by the teachers will act as a benchmark for educational administrators, policy planners, curriculum framers and all other concerned in bringing necessary changes and modifications related to different dimensions of inclusive education.

## Objectives

- To identify the major problems faced by secondary school teachers in imparting education to the children through inclusive means.
- To suggest intervention for improving implementation of inclusive education in normal education settings.

## Methodology

### Method

Normative survey method was employed

### Sample

In the present investigation a total of 200 secondary school teachers were selected from aided and government schools of Thrissur and Palakkad district of Kerala. Purposive sampling technique was adopted.

## Tools

Questionnaire with open ended questions and semi-structured interview schedule prepared by the investigator was used for collecting the views and perception of teachers regarding inclusive education.

## Statistical techniques

Content analysis was used for analyzing the collected data **Analysis of data**

- **Problems Regarding curricular and co-curricular aspects of inclusive education**

The curriculum lacks the required flexibility to cater the needs of children with disabilities. There are limited developmentally appropriate teaching-learning materials for children both with and without disabilities. The teaching-learning process addresses the individual learning needs of children in a limited way

- **Regarding resource management**

It is a great challenge to impart education through inclusive means because adequate facilities are not available in normal schools. Different disabilities require different supports. The number of skilled and trained personnel for supporting inclusive practices is not adequate to meet the needs of different type of disability. The unavailability of equipments and specific teaching-learning materials in normal schools were perceived as major hindrances for effective execution of inclusive education.

- **Regarding classroom management**

To manage the energy levels and ensure appropriate learners participation and create pairs or groups that have a positive impact on learning are the major challenges faced by the teachers. The other major problems as forwarded by teachers included the unfavorable attitude of parents of normal children towards needs of special children, difficulties in establishing and maintaining good relationship between normal children and special children in same classroom.

- **Lack of infrastructure**

The majority of schools in Kerala are poorly designed and few are equipped to meet the the unique needs of students with disabilities. The lack of disability friendly transportation services and accessible buildings are the main challenges in this programme. Authorities failed to arrange the physical facilities like wheel chairs, ramp and rail facility, adapted toilets, soundproof classroom for hearing impaired students etc. in regular schools. Most of the schools have no resource rooms and the existing ones are not well equipped.

- **Shortage of resource teachers**

Resource teachers have to spend most time in block resource centers (BRC), in training programs, meetings, conferences etc. They are available at schools only 3 days in a week. Each resource teachers has to visit more than 10 schools in a panchayat and also has to take more than 3 classes in a week which is not practicable. Resource teachers are compelled to help children in all individual subjects; as they are only expertise in one or two subject.

How

a Social science teacher assist the disabled child to do their Mathematics problem?

- **Evaluation and Monitoring**

The same evaluation tool is administered for children both with and without disabilities. Scribes are allotted to these differentially abled students, but unfortunately the burden lies on the scribes to make the students successful in the examinations. IED students have no role in these examinations.

### **Major problems faced by the teachers in imparting education through inclusive means**

- Normal schools are lacking in basic facilities which are prerequisite for effective implementation of inclusive education in general School situations
- The unavailability of special teachers or resource teachers, equipments and specific teaching learning materials in normal schools.
- Lack of in service training to teachers serving in normal schools.
- Not enough scope in present curriculum for educating special children.

### **Major Suggestions from teachers**

- It was recommended that teachers serving in normal schools should be provided intensive and extensive training through seminar, workshops, refresher courses etc. For this regard DIETs and BRCs should come forward with specifically devised and designed programs.
- The time has come to scale up successful experiments on teacher training. B.Ed.course should address the issue of education of children with disabilities so that teacher trainees will be better equipped to work in an inclusive environment. B.Ed. curriculum should include the methodology to be adopted for identifying the children with disabilities, classroom management, use of appropriate teaching methodologies, skills for adapting the curriculum development of teaching learning materials that are multi-sensory in nature, evaluation of learning etc.
- The teachers of general schools and special schools should come on a common platform to share their experiences about characteristics, needs and problems of different kinds of children.
- The government authorities should appoint special or resource teachers in every school; so that teachers can pay full attention to the needs and problems of IED students. A full time special teacher and a well equipped a resource room must be made compulsorily available in every school so as to resolve the problem of special children.
- Instead of mere physical inclusion of child in the class, special children should be allowed to choose the curriculum and there should be a flexible teaching and evaluating mechanism so that teachers can actively foster his/her learning potential.
- Adequate as well as appropriate infrastructure facilities and a barrier free environment should be provided in schools to make inclusive education a successful venture.

- The co-operation and assistance of Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) can be received in generating awareness among the community members.

## Conclusion

In preparation for the implementation of inclusive education there should be a thorough situation analysis. This should include general access to education services, dropouts and repetition rates, emphasis on creation of necessary infrastructure and a positive climate within the school to promote inclusive education. Then only we can say that we are accepting the differences and celebrating the diversity.

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