

Teacher Education for Inclusiveness of Students with Disabilities: Evidence from Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study is aim to investigate teacher education for inclusiveness of students with disabilities. The nature of the study is quantitative. The population of the study is all the public schools teachers across Pakistan. Through online solo data collection techniques randomly (50% males and 50% females) participants from public schools were selected. Data were analysis by means of SPSS. Findings of the study revealed that government has to play its role in inclusive education; teacher training should be mandatory as it prepares teachers to teach diverse classes. Besides, those policy guidelines are not implemented about inclusive education. Moreover education institutions in Pakistan are not prepared to fulfill to the children with special educational need. Lake of teacher training, lake of knowledge on inclusion and non-professional teachers are the major challenges. It is recommended that practical measure need to be taken by the government to implement the policy guideline in national level.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Inclusive education, Disabilities

INTRODUCTION

Schools are considered the roots of every student. Primary school teachers have more responsibility than any other. School teachers play vital roles in showing the best path and teaching children for the future. Unfortunately, there is a lack of teacher training. That's why they don't know how to deal with children, especially those children who are facing disabilities. Teacher training is crucial for efficient and quality education. As teacher training is one of the difficult jobs, as it provide possibilities and show best activities for teacher to learn and apply. This will help them to develop and advance their profession. Teacher education helps to associate what they have learned theoretically and what they are doing in real-life teaching. When they get training, they will help new teachers so that they can support their students (Darling-Hammond and Branford 2007). Teachers are important members of any educational institution and play a vital role in inclusive education. However, they face major issues like shortage of materials, high students' ratio, and lack of training. We need to enhance teacher education for inclusion. Without teacher training, support, and access to technology, we cannot adopt inclusive education (Alaverdyan and Simon, 2009).Teacher education is important for teachers to know different pedagogical skills, classroom management, and collaborative learning. It is hard for untrained teacher to deal with disable students. Researcher said that teacher who doesn't get any training and traditional mindset has finite outcome on inclusive class. They suggest contemporary training for teachers and mention some factors for effective teaching including converting theoretical experiences into practical, long-term programs and using nontraditional pedagogy (Brouwer and Korthagen 2005). Teachers play a vital role in the teaching-learning

process. Teacher training is essential to choose the best teaching method instead of choosing on their own (Jardinez and Natividad, 2024). In the current situation, there is a need to take steps locally and globally for inclusion. We need an urgent-based teacher education for general and new teachers to fully support and include all students (Kalgotra, 2020). To ensure inclusion, instructor could be prepared more effectively, when they attend teacher training workshop and get insight about the importance of work with diverse group (Florian, D Camedda, 2020). Teachers' professional development is vital for effective teaching learning process and including everyone. Few steps need to be adopted to make the best professionals, such as, connect teachers with goals oriented teaching. Teacher training is important for inclusive education. After teacher training, teacher performance should be measure through specified criteria so that teachers can convey knowledge in the best way in the inclusive classrooms (Reynolds, 2001). Price (2018) discussed that even though the concept of inclusive education is raised globally, the policies regarding inclusive education are generally established in Western political and cultural contexts.

Another study conducted by (Shaukat and Rasheed 2015) stated that the major problems related to teachers professional development and students selection are primarily vital for successful inclusive practices.

Special and integrated education in the history of Pakistan shows that religious institutions are primarily responsible for the investigation of children with special needs (Khan, Hasmi, Khanum 2017). During independence, children and adults having disabilities were attending education in few schools. After independence, some private institutions became dynamic to provide special needs to learners. For the first time, education for children with disabilities was established in 1959 by the National Board of Education on the state agenda. Establishment of specialized educational institutions for children and adults that proposed intellectual disability. It also highlighted the importance of teacher training to teach disable students (Khan, Hasmi, and Khanum 2017). Funding was also provided as part of the education policy 1972 for Special Education. In the 1980s and 1990s, the United Nations looked into supporter countries taking into account the issues of people with disabilities, including Pakistan (GOP 1998). With this global initiative, Hameed and Manzoor (2018) said that the Pakistani government in the 1980s and policies for political guidelines for those with special education needs were taken seriously for further development of those with special education needs through the introduction of various ministries and organizations. Sharma, Sharkat, and Furlonger (2014) emphasize that policies cannot be implemented without teachers, and are ready to support children with disabilities when working closely with resource teachers.

Inclusive education is achieved when children with disabilities are treated the same as others, and it should be linked with the concept of special education policy (Stubbs 2008). To ensure inclusive education, learning resources need to be used in such a way that meets all student requirements, including disabled students. Quality education and inclusive education have a direct relation. One will be promoted, and the other will be achieved (Heijnen and Maathuis, 2016). Inclusive education demands teachers to accept their responsibilities and teach students what they need to learn and from where they belong. Teachers who do not attend any educational training cannot fulfill all these requirements. Teacher training is essential for inclusion (EJ Boyce, 2017). There are still many teachers who don't possess knowledge about how to teach special students, which is ultimately effect in both academically and educational prospect of disable students. However, the report shows that almost 15% of children are disabled in the world, and many of them are not attending school. We need to prepare teachers through training for inclusive education (Lewis and Bagree 2013). Implementation of inclusive education is totally dependent on the teacher's profession, skills, and competency. Monitoring team express their concerns that teachers are not prepared for teaching

students with Disabilities. Teacher Training can prepare them to create an effective collaborative environment (MC Cardona Molto 2009). Instructor knowledge about inclusion is difficult step that's why teacher should be connect collaboratively and individually for more successful in learning instruction and techniques (Avalos, 2011).

Disabilities have different types, and each type has a different impact on students' performance. Students who are disabled have also the right to get an education and serve themselves in society, but due to societal restrictions disabled children are always discriminated against and excluded. The report shows that in today's world, most children with disabilities are learning with their peers without disabilities. The world has almost adopted the policy of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Kart, 2021).

The need for teacher education is critical because it enables teachers to develop and maintain classrooms for students with disabilities. It is a significant area in the practice of education, but the teachers in Pakistan are unable to sufficiently understand and assist students with disabilities. For that matter, there is no sufficient training that allows teachers to create inclusive classrooms, and this will ultimately affect the learning and social growth of students. The inclusiveness of students in Pakistan is hindered by the significant gap in teacher training and teacher education, especially in creating an inclusive classroom for students with disabilities. Despite the importance of the inclusion of students with disabilities, there is a shortage of knowledge among teachers. This study's aim is to examine the current state of teacher training and educations mainly focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Research Hypothesis

Teachers who don't have knowledge and skills can create inclusive learning environments for students with disabilities.

Research Objective

To identify the knowledge and skills required by teachers to effectively include students with disabilities in the classroom.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study is quantitative in nature. The population is all the public schools teachers across Pakistan. Through random sampling technique samples (50% males, and 50% females) from public schools were selected. The research tools were close-ended three point Likert-type questionnaires, and data were collected through questioners. To analyze the data, SPSS software was used.

Table: 1

S/no	Statements	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	P-value
1	Understand the importance of inclusion of disable students	35%	32.5%	32.5%	.333
2	Teachers Knowledge about different types of disabilities	0%	8.5%	91.5%	.756
3	Teachers need training using technology to support disable students	0%	5.5%	94.5%	.447
4	Teachers should receive training communicating effectively with disable students	0%	8.5%	91.5%	.447
5	Training programs should focus on adapting curriculum for disable students	0%	13.5%	86.5%	.147
6	Inclusive education training should be a mandatory component of teacher education programs	3.5%	13%	83.5%	.402
7	Disable students deserve education in general schools, not special	26%	28%	36%	.497

8	Inclusive education enables disable students to learn with their peers.	13%	33%	54%	.361
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Table 1 describe that there is no significant relationship (P= .333) between respondents and the idea that the 'Majority of teachers understand the importance of inclusive education for students with disabilities.' however, 35% of respondents disagreed with the idea, 32.5% were undecided, and 32.5% agreed. No 2 is meaningful relationship was found (P= .756) between the statement that 'Teachers need adequate knowledge about different types of disabilities'. While 91.5% of respondents agreed with the idea and 8.5% of respondents were neutral. (S/No 3)No purposeful connection was identified (P= .447) between the genders and the concept that ' Teachers need training on using assistive technology to support students with disabilities'. Whereas, 94.5% of individuals agreed with the statement, and 5.5% did not participate. (S/No 4)There is no strong association discovered (P= .147) between teacher responses and the theory that 'Training programs should focus on developing teachers' skills in adapting curriculum for students with disabilities'. Additionally, 86.5% of teachers agreed with the theory, and 13.5 were not sure. (Serial number 5)no significant association was found (P= .447) between professional response and the idea that 'Teachers should receive training on communicating effectively with students with disabilities'. But 91.5% of professionals agreed with the idea, and 8.5% were undecided.(Item number 6)no purposeful relationship was discovered (P= .402) between the participant and the statement 'Inclusive education training should be a mandatory component of teacher education programs'. However, 83.5% of participants endorsed the idea, 13% did not participate, and 3.5% disagreed. Purposeful relation was found (P= .497) between the genders and the statement that 'Students with disabilities deserve an education in general schools, not separate special education.' Furthermore, 36% of respondents agreed with the idea, 28% were not sure, and 26% denied the statement. Relation was found in (P= .361) between the individual responses and the theory that 'Inclusive education enables students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers'. While 54% of individuals agreed, 33% did not participate, and 13% refused it.

Table: 2

S/no	Statements	Disagre e	Neutral	Agre e	P-value
1	Inclusive education helps students to reach their full potential.	8%	17.5%	74.5%	.323
2	Government should promote inclusive education through teacher training.	3%	12%	85%	.027
3	Untrained teachers cannot involve disable students in collaborative learning.	3%	22.5%	74.5%	.038
4	Advanced teaching methods for disable students is necessary.	0%	15.5%	84.5%	.079
5	Ongoing training on teaching students with disabilities is essential.	0%	13%	87%	.207
6	Teacher training prepares teachers to teach students with diverse needs.	8%	5%	87%	.448
7	Teachers training ensure supportive learning environments for students with disabilities.	5.5%	5%	89.5%	.001
8	Differentiated instruction is mandatory to meet disable students needs.	7.5%	23.5%	69%	.389

Table 2 shows that (S/No 1) there is no importance relation found ($P= .323$) between genders and the concept that 'Inclusive education fosters a supportive environment and allows all students to reach their full potential.' However, 74.5% of the participants agreed with the idea, 17.5% were undecided, and 8% denied it. In there is a significant relationship found ($P= 0.27$) between the individual responses and the statement that 'government promotes inclusive education through teacher training'. Furthermore, 85% agreed, 12% did not participate, and 3% refused the statement. Meaningful association was found ($P= .38$) between the participant and the theory that 'Untrained teachers cannot involve students with disabilities in collaborative learning.' While 74.5% agreed with the idea, 22.5 did not participate, and 3% disagreed. Purposeful connection was found ($P= .079$) between the teacher's responses and the concept that 'Adapting advanced teaching methods for students with disabilities is necessary'. However, 84.5% of teachers agreed, and 15.5% were not sure. Significant relation was found ($P= .207$) between the participant and the statement that 'Ongoing training in teaching students with disabilities is essential'. While 87% of respondents agreed with the theory and 13% were undecided. Another purposeful association was found ($P= .448$) between professional responses and the idea that 'Teacher training prepares teachers to teach students with diverse needs'. But 87% of respondents agreed, 8% refused it, and 5% were neutral. In(S/No 7) there is a significant relation found ($P= .001$) between the teacher's responses and the theory that 'Teachers should receive training to create supportive learning environments for students with disabilities.' Also, 89.5% agreed with the statement, 5.5% disagreed, and 5% did not participate. Meaningful connection was found ($P= .389$) between the respondents and the idea that 'Differentiated instruction is mandatory to meet the needs of students with disabilities'. Furthermore, 69% agreed, 23.5% were not sure, and 7.5% disagreed.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority of participants do not understand how to create an inclusive environment for disabled student, while 32% agreed that teachers have knowledge about it, and 32% respondents are undecided. However, 36% of respondents agreed that disabled students can also learn in general schools. They don't need any special education, but 28% were undecided, and 26% considered special education.

An average of 82% of professionals agreed that the government has to play its role in inclusive education; teacher training should be mandatory as it prepares teachers to teach diverse classes, and untrained teachers cannot involve disabled students in the learning process. Teachers need to communicate effectively and use advanced instructional techniques and technology, they suggesting that continuous teacher training will ensure inclusion.

The hypothesis 'Teachers who don't have knowledge and skills can create inclusive learning environments for students with disabilities' is rejected. Therefore, trained teachers can create an environment where disabled students feel free, easy and collaborate in the teaching learning process. Kazimi and Kazmi (2018) reported that further investigation is necessary to comprehend the contribution of stakeholders in implementing inclusive education practices.

Understanding by Design backward mapping curriculum development model makes provisions for the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities which is a step towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Hameed and Manzoor 2019a). Shaukat and Rasheed (2015) noted the necessity of both pre-service and in-service education as these components can influence their attitudes and beliefs.

Diversity is a blessing, and Pakistan has more diversity. Teacher training can ensure that disabled students' needs are a priority and create an inclusive environment. The government should promote training for teachers, and without a license, nobody is allowed to teach students. This is a major issue further research should be based on expert opinions.

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