

KNOWLEDGE OF IN-SERVICE TEACHERS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN RELATION TO BACKGROUND VARIABLES

Ms. Poonam Devi*

Dr. Balwinder Kaur**

Abstract

Teacher's knowledge is the key to successfully implementing any educational program. In this study knowledge was defined as the way teachers conceptualize inclusive education. Barriers to the success of inclusive education include insufficient knowledge of the teacher. If inclusive education is to truly become effective, then there is a requirement for teachers to be able to gain more knowledge and understanding of it. Sample consisted of 200 numbers of secondary school teachers selected randomly, out of which 100 male and 100 female teachers and 100 graduate and 100 postgraduate teachers were considered. The tools used were Knowledge of Inclusive Education Scale (KIES) by Kuyini Bawa (2004) The findings revealed no significant difference between knowledge of male and female in-service teachers and similarly no such difference was found in graduate and post graduate in-service teachers.

Key words: Knowledge, Inclusive education, In-service teachers, Male, Female

Introduction

Knowledge can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit (as with practical skill or expertise) or explicit (as with the theoretical understanding of a subject); it can be more or less formal or systematic.

***Research Scholar, Department of Education, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

****Associate Professor, Govt. College of Education, Sector -20D Chandigarh**

Drucker (2012) defined knowledge as information that changes something or somebody either by becoming grounds for actions, or by making an individual (or an institution) capable of different or more effective action.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) defined knowledge as, a fluid mix of framed experience, contextual information, values and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. Notice that there are two parts to their definition:

First, there is content: a fluid mix of framed experience, contextual information, values and expert insight. This includes a number of things that we have within us, such as experiences, beliefs, values, how we feel, motivation, and information.

The second part defines the function or purpose of knowledge that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. According to oxford English dictionary, Knowledge refer to expertise and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject what is known in a particular field or in total; facts and information or awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation.

Knowledge is a vast term and it is not possible to fully assess people's knowledge of an idea or concept within a single study.

Teachers Knowledge about Inclusive Education

Crane-Mitchel and Hedge (2007) emphasized that preschool teachers do not understand the characteristics of young children with disabilities and do not have knowledge related to meeting these students' needs. Moreover, the teachers need more training on inclusive practices, not only focusing their knowledge, but also their skills and experiences and most of them emphasized the necessity of the hands-on training opportunities for working with young children with

disabilities. Furthermore, the researchers suggested additional research investigating the quality teacher training programs and licensure requirements.

Hodkinson (2005) strongly believes that the implementation of inclusive education is dependent upon the way individual teacher conceptualize an idea or concept such as inclusive education. There are several studies on this issue and Lawson, Parker and Sikes (2006) used a qualitative approach in order to inclusive varied among participants and teachers' narratives about inclusive education focused on the human aspect of day-to-day involvement with individual pupils. Another study by Singal (2008) focused on knowledge and aimed to understand inclusive education at various levels of Indian education system by conducting a qualitative study. She focused on the perceptions, practices and experience of professionals in inclusive classrooms. She suggested that teacher's knowledge and skills for developing inclusive teaching practices, as well as the encouragement of all children in a school setting. Similarly another study by Hodkinson (2006) examined secondary teacher knowledge and understanding of inclusion. His aim was to find out how teachers in England, especially newly qualified teachers, conceptualized inclusive education, as well as discovering their attitude towards it. The author that his population also had diverse conceptualizations of inclusion, which word mediated by classroom practice Hodkinson and Devarakonda (2009) examined how inclusion understood by teachers in India so through literature review and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The study findings revealed that inclusion is often not well understood and seen by teachers as a vague and complex concept. The author argues that if inclusive education is to truly become effective, then there is a requirement for teachers to be able to gain more knowledge and understanding of it.

In contrast Leung and Mak (2010) found that 60.8% of participants interpreted inclusive education as education involving students with special educational needs in mainstream schools and programmes.

Sadler (2005) found that 87.6% of teachers reported that they have limited or very limited knowledge of inclusive education. None of the teachers rated themselves as having sufficient knowledge.

Subramanian and Manickaraj (2017) explored the relationship between knowledge, attitudes and competency skills of regular school teachers (n=149) pertaining to children with special education needs and Inclusive Education. The knowledge about children with special education needs and Inclusive Education were measured using a 4 point rating scale and an informal questionnaire that were specifically modified for this study. The attitudes, concerns and competency skills were measured using 4 point rating scales. Results of the study indicated significant correlations between knowledge about children with special education needs and attitudes towards disability and teacher efficacy for inclusive practices; attitudes towards disability and attitudes towards inclusive practices and attitudes towards inclusive education and concerns about inclusive education and teacher efficacy for inclusive practices. The findings offer insight into preparation of training programs for teachers for successful implementation of inclusive education.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To compare the knowledge of male and female teachers towards inclusive education.
2. To compare the knowledge of graduate and post-graduate teachers towards inclusive

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference between knowledge of male and female teachers towards inclusive education.
2. There is no significant difference between knowledge of graduate and post-graduate teachers towards inclusive education.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was implied to find out the differences between male and female and graduate and post-graduate teachers towards inclusive education.

Sample

A sample of 200 teachers was selected from the Government Model Schools of Chandigarh. Out of 100 teachers, 100 of them were males and 100 numbers of female

and 100 were graduates and 100 were post-graduates. The sample was selected with simple random sampling technique.

Tools Used

“Knowledge of Inclusive Education Scale (KIES) By Bawa (2004) Adapted

The Knowledge of Inclusive Education Scale (KIES) was chosen as an appropriate measure of Knowledge towards inclusive education developed by Bawa (2004) to measure the knowledge of qualified teachers towards inclusive education. Due to unavailability of any suitable tool to access knowledge towards inclusive education in the present study, the investigator decided to adapt the knowledge of Inclusive Education Scale (KIES) by Bawa (2004). This instrument was developed by the present authors for the purpose of measuring principals’ and teachers’ knowledge of inclusive education in Ghana, on the basis that knowledge of inclusion increases teachers’ ability to provide classroom modifications for students with diverse learning needs (De Bettencourt, 1999; Leyser et al., 1994; Schumm & Vaughn, 1995).

The items of the scale covered areas such as:

- 1) Inclusive education philosophy and policy guidelines, including The Ministry of Education policy guidelines.
- 2) Characteristics of learners, including knowledge of the different disability types, learning styles and characteristics that indicate the need for special instruction and managing procedures.
- 3) Planning instructional content and managing the teaching and learning environment. This covered issues such as the different forms of assessment and their purposes, the design of Individualized Educational Programmes (IEPs) and the use of cooperative learning and peer tutoring.
- 4) Organisational roles and collaborative partnerships, including the role of teachers, parents and other professionals in inclusion processes.

The items were worded in a fashion similar to the examples below. The respondents were required to indicate their level of knowledge by circling the figure that best described their level of knowledge.

- I. Knowledge of the philosophy underlying inclusive education: 1 2 3 4

- II. Knowledge of characteristics of the different disability types:12 3 4
- III. Knowledge of instructional or remedial techniques recommended for inclusive classrooms (such as cooperative learning formats, peer tutoring and team-teaching):12 3
- IV. The responses to the 16 items of the scale were rated on a four-point Likert-type classification as follows: No Knowledge (1), Little Knowledge (2), Good Knowledge (3) and Very Good Knowledge (4). The total score for a particular respondent could range from 16–96, with higher scores indicating a better knowledge of inclusion.

The reliability analysis showed a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.88. Factor analysis yielded four factors, namely, Theory (Factor 1) (0.86), Administration (Factor 2) (0.81), Practice (Factor 3) (0.75) and Support (Factor 4) (0.64).

3.4.5.1. Reliability

The reliability of the scale was re-established by the investigator. The reliability was calculated by test re-test method and was found 0.79. The re-construct reliability analysis showed a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.877.it is less than standardize tool reliability.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1: Mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis for the variable knowledge towards inclusive education

| Variables | Mean | SD | SK | KU |
|-----------|------|------|------|-----|
| Knowledge | 2.56 | .509 | .137 | .07 |

Before considering any data analysis it is very important to check the normal distribution of data to be computed. Table 1 presents the value of mean, SD, skewness and kurtosis of total sample for gender and qualifications of knowledge towards inclusive education. From the above table it can be seen that value of mean is 2.56 and SD is 0.50. The value of skewness is found to be 0.137 which means distribution is slightly skewed positively which can be considered equal to

zero. The value of kurtosis came out to be 0.07 which is less than .263. Hence the distribution curve is leptokurtic that can be taken approximately 0.263.

Table 2: Mean, SD and t-value showing difference between male and female in service teacher

| Variables | Df | Mean | SD | t-ratio |
|-----------|-----|------|------|---------|
| Male | 100 | 2.58 | .52 | .33 |
| Female | 100 | 2.55 | ..50 | |

*significant at 0.05 level

OBJECTIVE 1: To study the difference between mean scores of knowledge of male and female teachers towards inclusive education.

HYPOTHESIS 1: There is no significant difference between mean scores of knowledge of male and female teachers towards inclusive education.

Interpretation and Discussion based on table 2

Table 2 shows mean scores of knowledge towards inclusive education. As can be seen from the table, male teachers have 2.58 mean score of knowledge with the standard deviation (S.D.) .52 and female teachers have 2.55 mean score of knowledge with the standard deviation (S.D.) .50. The difference in mean scores of knowledge of male and female teachers has been tested for statistical significance with the help of independent sample t-test. As shown in the table, t-value 0.33 has not been found significant at .05 level. The result indicates that there is no significant difference in knowledge of male and female teachers. Therefore the hypothesis, “There is no significant difference between mean scores of knowledge of male and female teachers towards inclusive education” stands accepted.

Table 3: Mean, SD and t-value showing difference between under graduate and post graduate in-service teacher

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | t-ratio |
|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----------------|
| UG | 100 | 2.57 | .47 | .090 |
| PG | 100 | 2.56 | .53 | Not Significant |

Objective 2: To study the difference between mean scores of knowledge of graduate and post graduate teachers towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between mean scores of knowledge of graduate and post graduate teachers towards inclusive education.

Interpretation and Discussion based on table 3

Table 3 shows mean scores of knowledge towards inclusive education. As can be seen from the table that graduate teachers have 2.57 mean score knowledge with the standard deviation (S.D.) .47 and post graduate teachers have 2.56 mean score of knowledge with the standard deviation (S.D.) .53. The difference in mean score of knowledge of post graduate teachers and graduate teachers has been tested for statistical significance with the help of independent sample t-test. As shown in the table, t-value 0.090 has not been found significant at .05 level. The result indicates that there is no significant difference in knowledge of graduate and post graduate teachers. Therefore the hypothesis, “There is no significant difference between mean scores of knowledge of graduate and post graduate teachers towards inclusive education” stands accepted.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the present study was to study the knowledge of in-service teachers towards inclusive education. On the basis of analysis and interpretation of results the investigator draws the following main findings: There was no significant difference between mean scores of knowledge of male and female teachers towards inclusive education and between mean scores of

knowledge of graduate and post graduate teachers towards inclusive education It means that the gender and qualification has no influence on the knowledge of in-service teachers towards inclusive education.

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