

**EXPLORING TEACHER'S AWARENESS AND CHALLENGES TEACHERS' FACING  
IN IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT PRIMARY LEVEL**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study explores the barriers to inclusive education that Chandigarh, India's elementary school teachers have to tackle. The study focuses on the awareness, teaching methods, and challenges encountered by teachers, emphasizing the need for early adoption of inclusive practices. Using a descriptive survey method, the research collected data from 120 government school teachers through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The findings reveal that while teachers are generally aware of inclusive education, there are gaps in their teaching methods and resource availability. The study identifies challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited training opportunities, and a high teacher-to-student ratio. Recommendations include teacher training programs, workshops, and practical exposure to enhance inclusivity in primary education. The research aims to serve as a valuable resource for educational institutions and policymakers, contributing insights into the hurdles faced by teachers in fostering inclusive learning environments.*

**Key Words: Teacher's awareness, Challenges of primary teachers and Inclusive Education**

**INTRODUCTION**

As per UNESCO, inclusive education is viewed as an active process that recognizes and attends to the different requirements of each student by encouraging increased engagement with the curriculum, building relationships with various communities and cultures, and reducing instances of exclusion from education as a whole as well as from educational environments. Inclusive education has been a vital part of education system in India since ancient times where in all children were provided with equal educational and occupational opportunities under one roof in the same school. The focus of educational institutions was identification of abilities and capacities of the learners and channelizing their potentials in an appropriate and productive

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pathway so as to create diverse yet inclusive society. Special education is now described as a system of support provided to help and address the needs of a subset of pupils, rather than as a placement. According to Stainback and Stainback (1996), inclusive schools are designed to satisfy the educational needs of all of their students by providing shared yet adaptable spaces and activities. Loreman and Deppeler (2005) define inclusion as the complete integration of children with various abilities, encompassing both giftedness and disability, into all facets of education that are accessible and enjoyable for other students. This concept entails regular classroom participation and a genuine appreciation for diversity. Therefore, it's critical to integrate those children into regular classrooms so they can develop their social skills and self-confidence. All students engaging and receiving equitable treatment in school is the ultimate goal of inclusive education. To make sure that Education for All truly is for everyone, it is crucial to keep in mind that inclusive education is a continuous effort. Children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, children with special needs, and children living in distant or nomadic areas should all have access to high-quality education on par with that of other children in order to achieve equal opportunities in education. All students and instructors benefit from diverse classrooms .McDonnell (1997) said teachers need access to information that can enhance their comprehension and recognition of students with special needs. This includes guidance on identifying learning difficulties and strategies for adjusting both the learning environment and instructional methods to cater to the specific requirements of these learners.

The Government of India acknowledges the restricted advancements in inclusive education, as highlighted by Sharma and Das (2015). Since 1975, the government has implemented a number of attempts to address this situation, such as national-level regulations and pilot programmes to provide education to children with disabilities. When the Indian government passed the Persons with Disability Act in 1996, it was a big stride forward. The Central, State, and Union Territory Governments are required by this legislation to guarantee that every child with a disability has access to a "free and appropriate" education until the age of eighteen. The successful execution of inclusive education relies heavily on the positive attitude of regular classroom teachers. It is their attitudes and determination that play a pivotal role in effectively implementing the concept of inclusion on a nationwide scale. To foster a positive attitude among teachers, it is crucial to organize in-service teacher training. Comprehensive training and skill development programmes are also required for ordinary classroom teachers in order to prepare them to adopt inclusive practices for students with disabilities in the real world (Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2017).The current education system aims for inclusiveness and diversity, ensuring all students

have access to knowledge and skills for national contribution. Accommodating diverse backgrounds poses challenges, requiring collaboration among educators, parents, and community leaders. Despite the widespread talk about inclusive education, the goal remains unfulfilled. Special needs children, considered "different," require tailored attention and a supportive environment. Inclusion facilitates their active participation as equal citizens in society. Recruiting special educators and fostering shared leadership between school, home, and community enhances the realization of an inclusive school system.

### **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

In the Indian education context, teachers face challenges with large class sizes and lack the necessary tools to manage students with disabilities. This study emphasizes the importance of addressing these challenges in primary education to establish a foundation for inclusive learning. The focus is on early adoption of inclusive practices, envisioning that this approach will equip students with academic, social, and developmental skills. The research aims to tackle the lack of awareness among teachers regarding the identification and support of students with diverse needs. Specifically focusing on Government primary schools in Chandigarh, India, the study seeks to be a valuable resource for educational institutions by highlighting the hurdles teachers face in creating inclusive learning environments. The research suggests providing teachers with relevant practices through workshops and seminars, aiming to bridge the knowledge gap and enhance their ability to identify and support diverse needs effectively. Practical exposure, such as visits to special schools and hands-on activities with diverse learners, is recommended to foster a more informed and empathetic teaching community capable of confidently embracing inclusive education.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To investigate primary educators' awareness on inclusive education.
- To evaluate the techniques of instruction that educators employ in a classroom that is inclusive.
- To ascertain the challenges that educators encounter while executing inclusive education

### **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was restricted to teachers in primary schools in Chandigarh's government schools.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey method of Investigation was used in present study which will help to interpret the meaning and significance of what is to be studied. To ascertain the obstacles teachers, encounter when implementing inclusive education in primary schools, a blended

approach, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative methods, was employed.

### **SAMPLE**

For this study, the schools were chosen using a random sample technique. The research started by compiling a list of Chandigarh's 120 government schools, broken down into three sections. Phase I consists of 30 low density sectors (Sectors 1 through 30) distributed over an area of 9,000 acres, Phase II consists of 17 high density sectors (Sectors 31 through 47) spread over an area of 6,000 acres, and Phase III, beginning with Sector 47, is now under development. Ten schools were chosen at random from Chandigarh's list of government schools, and effort was made to ensure that at least two instructors from each school were chosen for the data gathering. The questionnaire was forwarded to many teachers out of which only 120 teachers responded. Hence, the current study included a total sample of 80 teachers working in government schools.

### **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The investigator employed the technique of observation, interview and questionnaire. The details are as follows:

- **Observation:** In this investigation, the researcher engaged in observing the teaching methods employed by teachers in instructing primary students within the classroom setting. The main goal of the observation was to assess the interest, conduct, and interactions of the teachers during the teaching and learning process.
- **Interview:** As part of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted, incorporating open-ended questions posed to the participants. These questions were formulated based on insights derived from an examination of relevant literature, specifically targeting the primary objective of the study.
- **Questionnaire:** The researcher created a custom questionnaire with three distinct dimensions aligned with the study's formulated objectives. This instrument comprised 24 questions, including three negative statements and the remaining statements being positive. To ensure its validity, experts validated the tool through content validity assessment.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLS**

- The tool primarily consists of an initial draft having 29 questions which include 12 questions in Dimension I (To explore the level of awareness of teachers with respect to inclusive education), 14 questions in Dimension II (To assess the teaching methods that teachers use in an inclusive education) and 5 questions in Dimension III (Challenges teachers face in implementing

inclusive education).The questionnaire contained both positive and negative statements. The positive statement was 24 and negative statement was 5.As this was self-made questionnaire and need to be validated by the subject experts. The tool was then given to experts which were incorporated in the test and final draft was prepared. Certain modifications and deletions of the items suggested by the expert and were incorporated. The final draft contained 24 questions including both positive (21) and negative (3) statements. In present study, Likert type method of scale construction was used by the researcher. Includes three different dimensions based on the formulated objectives.

**Table 1: Shows the Details of Awareness, Knowledge and Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education.**

Dimension 1 (To explore the level of awareness of teachers with respect to inclusive education).	Two point Likert scale (Yes/No)
Dimension II (To assess the teaching methods that teachers use in an inclusive education).	Five point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)
Dimension III (Challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education).	Two point Likert scale (Yes/No)

### SCORING

Item wise analysis of the data was obtained from the questionnaire. Both positive and negative questions were there, table 1 gives the details of positive and negative items in the scale. There is total 24 questions in the scale. A total of 3 statements are negatively worded and marks are rewarded on the scale 0-1 or 5-1. A total of 21 statements are positively worded and marks are rewarded on the scale of 1-0 or 1-5.

**Table 2: Positive and Negative items of Scale**

Positive Items	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18,19,20,21 and 24
Negative Items	15,22 and 23

**Table 3: Scoring for Two-point scale**

Type of Statement	Yes	No
Negative	0	1
Positive	1	0

**Table 4: Scoring for Five-point scale**

Type of Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Negative	5	4	3	2	1
Positive	1	2	3	4	5

### STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

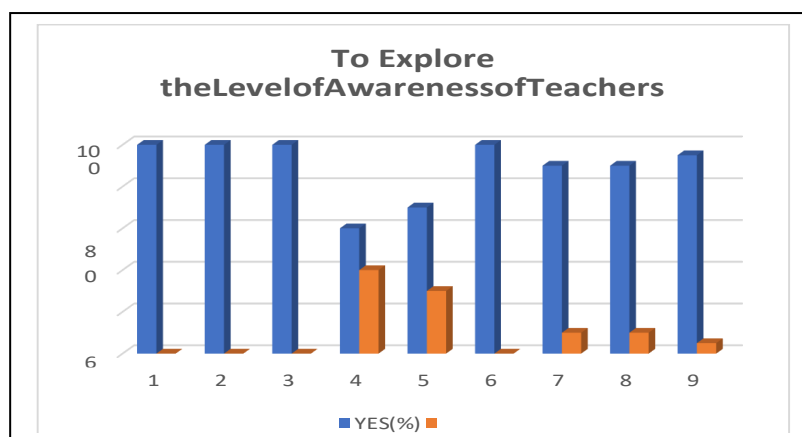
The technique of percentages was used by the researcher for item wise analysis of the data collected from the primary teachers. It helped to interpret the data precisely.

### ANALYSIS BASED ON QUESTIONNAIRE BY INVESTIGATOR

**Table 5- To Explore the Level of Awareness of Teachers with Respect to Inclusive Education.**

S. No.	ITEM	RESPONSES	
		YES(%)	NO (%)
1	I understand the term inclusive education	100	0
2	Does it occur without any obstacles or exclusions of any kind, including those who might be disadvantaged as a result of a disability?	100	0
3	Does it happen without any obstacles or exclusions of any kind, including people who could be disadvantaged because of emotional or behavioural issues?	100	0
4	Does it happen without any obstacles or exclusions of any kind, including	60	40

	people who could be disadvantaged because of their family history?		
5	Does every private school adopt inclusive education?	70	30
6	Is every Government school adopt inclusive?	100	0
7	Do every school recruit special teacher for achieving the goals of Inclusive education?	90	10
8	My school has a program for teachers' development.	90	10
9	The appropriate tools are available in my school to support the curriculum.	95	5



**Figure 1: Responses to the items mentioned in above table for dimension ‘To Explore the Level of Awareness of Teachers with Respect to Inclusive Education’**

**Discussion based on Figure1:**

**Item 1:** Every respondent is familiar with the concept of inclusive education.

**Item 2:** All primary teachers concurred that inclusive education does not include any exclusion or barriers, even those who could be marginalized because of a handicap. Therefore, we may conclude that every respondent is aware that there are no barriers related to a handicap that prevent inclusion in schools.

**Item 3:** Each primary teacher concurred that those who may be marginalized because of

emotional and behavioural issues are neither excluded or subject to barriers in inclusive education. Therefore, we may conclude that every respondent is aware that there are no barriers related to a handicap that prevent inclusion in schools.

**Item4:** According to the above data, all respondents are aware that there are no barriers related to disabilities that prevent inclusion in classes.

**Item 5:** 70% of primary teachers felt that all private educational institutions should practice inclusive education, while 30% of teachers believed that inclusive education is not practiced in private schools.

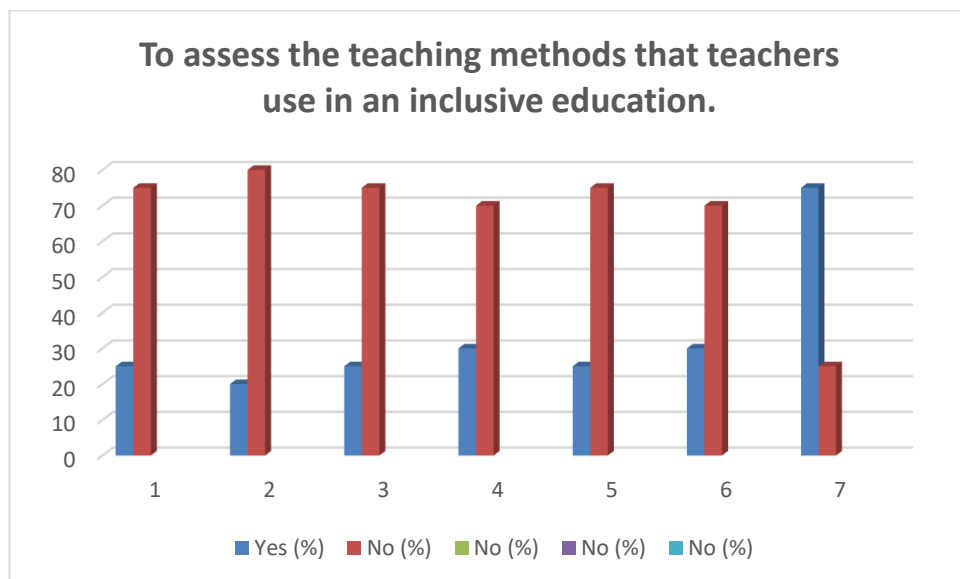
**Item 6:** All respondents agreed that government schools are now truly inclusive, according to the research.

**Table 6: Dimension II - To assess the teaching methods that teachers use in an inclusive education.**

S. No.	ITEM	RESPONSES				
		Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1	I am using Audio-visual aids	25	70	5	0	0
2	I use minimum discussion methods	5	30	45	5	15
3	I prefer demonstration method	20	55	25	0	0
4	I promote learning by doing through activities	70	30	0	0	0
5	I prefer field activities	20	55	20	5	0
6	I think project method is time consuming	0	15	40	25	20
7	I conduct Workshop and Seminars	10	5	30	55	0



8	I prefer peer-tutoring method in classroom	35	50	15	0	0
9	I organize the groups for assignment to promote Group learning	40	60	0	0	0
10	I provide study materials for special students	55	30	15	0	0
11	I give social rewards for motivating students (Appreciations or assigning monitor responsibility)	45	55	0	0	0



**Figure 2: Responses to the items mentioned in above table for dimension ‘To assess the teaching methods that teachers use in an inclusive education.’**

**Discussion on the basis of Table 4:**

**Item 1:** 70% of respondent were not using Audio Visual aids, this implies that most of the teachers don’t use audio visual aids in their Teaching Learning process. Teachers are not in favour of adopting new teaching strategies which support Inclusion.

**Item 2:** There are 15% of teachers who use minimum discussion method in the learning environment and hence supporting the concept of Inclusive Education.

**Item 3:** 55% of the respondents do not prefer demonstration method for the Teaching Learning process.

**Item 4:** 70% of the respondent do not use Activity method as teaching aid which observer benefits the students most.

**Item 5:** 55% of the respondents do not prefer field activity which means they deprive the students of real-life learning.

**Item 6:** In response to making use of project method of teaching in the classroom's mixed results were obtained.

**Item 7:** 55% of the respondents conduct workshops and seminars for the better understanding the students which supports the Inclusive Education.

**Item 8:** 50% of the respondents disagree for peer tutoring method in the classroom as they said that it creates more disturbance in classroom environment.

**Item 9:** 60% of the respondent disagree with the statement of organizing the group for assignment to promote group learning, which is known to lessen the communication barrier between the peers.

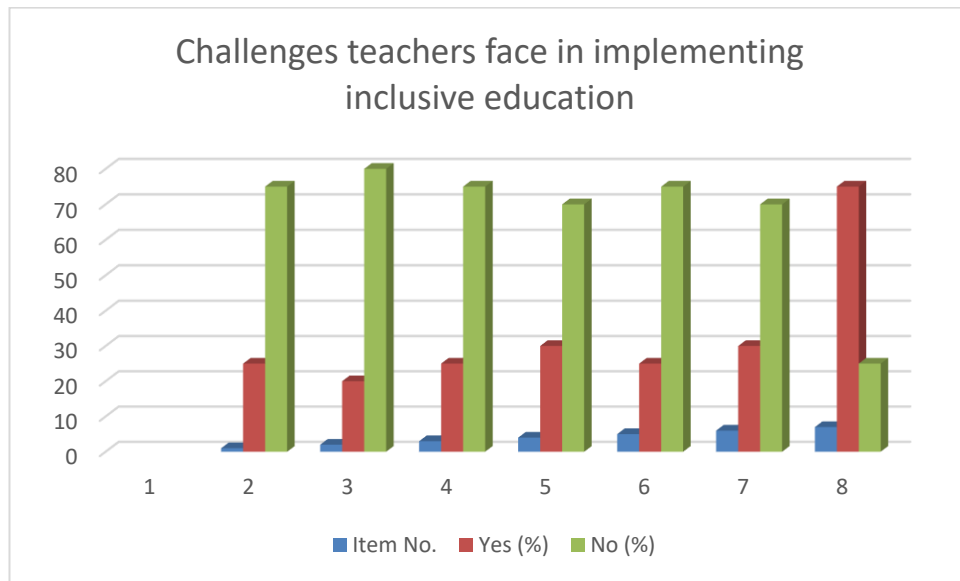
**Item 10:** 55% of the sample does not provide any study material for special students keeping in view their special needs and requirements.

**Item 11:** 55% of the respondents do not give any social rewards to motivate the students through appreciation or assigning monitor responsibility.

**Table 7: Dimension III - Challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education.**

S. No.	ITEM	RESPONSES	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	My school does have following resources		
	a)Ramps	25	75
	b)Modified Washrooms	20	80
	c)Modified Parking areas	25	75
	d)Special library	30	70
2	There aren't often workshops offered at my school to teach instructors how to work with students who require special education.	25	75

3	Teachers training institutes do not incorporate the concept of inclusion as part of curriculum.	30	70
4	The Ministry of Education does not provide the chances for students to enroll in courses linked to inclusive education programmes.	75	25



**Figure 3: Responses to the items mentioned in above table for dimension ‘Challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education’.**

**Discussion on the basis of Table 5:**

**Item 1:** 75 % of schools do not have ramps, 80% do not have modified washrooms, 75% do not modified parking areas and 70% schools do lack special library. This means schools require resources to improve the infrastructure of the school for making it more inclusive.

**Item 2:** 25% percent of primary teacher agreed that their schools do not provide regular workshops to train teacher methods to teach special learners, which makes difficult for the teacher for implementing inclusive education in their classrooms.

**Item 3:** From the above data, 70% of primary teacher agreed that teachers training institutes include the idea of inclusion in the curriculum, which implies that concept of inclusive curriculum is implemented up to the best.

**Item 4:** The percentage of primary teacher agreed that the Ministry of Education does not provide opportunity to participate in inclusive education programme courses is 75%, which means there are less opportunities for the teachers to leave their classes and assigned works instead of attending the courses for their professional growth in the area of educational

inclusiveness.

**Item 5:** The results showed that 90% of respondents agreed that all schools have special teachers on staff to help them accomplish the objectives of inclusive education, while 10% of respondents disagreed.

**Item 6:** All primary school teachers concurred that their institutions had unique teacher development programmes that support their colleagues' professional development in the area of inclusive education.

**Item 7:** Only 5% of respondents felt that their school lacked the necessary resources to support the curriculum for inclusive education, compared to 95% of primary teachers who believed that their schools had the necessary resources.

#### **ANALYSIS BASED ON INTERVIEW BY THE INVESTIGATOR**

The core of the investigator's research was the open-ended interview question. The answers provided during the interview helped to clarify the difficulties teachers encounter when implementing inclusive education. Following was the question that were posed and the corresponding answers:

**a) What are the main obstacles you experience when implementing inclusive education?**

The replies that illustrate the main difficulties instructors have when implementing inclusive education are as follows:

- Students with particular needs cannot receive specialized care
- It takes more time in traditional classes to meet their demands
- A lack of knowledge or abilities
- Lack of experience dealing with unique kids
- Lack of teaching aids to facilitate their learning
- A shorter class period to allow for completion of their class and individual attention
- Inability to manage the behavioural issues of special pupils
- The students' irregular behaviour
- Lack of special teachers in their school
- The infrastructure and furniture requirements not meeting their demands
- High teacher-to-student ratio

- Communication barriers
- Curriculum tailored to students' understanding
- Special classrooms and libraries
- Low level of cognitive understanding

The researcher found that teacher's interest and attitude was the major challenge pointed out. Also, the administrative processes of educational institution are a big challenge where the teachers are performing these activities and more official activities, which bound them with more time period and burdened their work. It not only burdened them but also made them less interested in classroom teaching due to the work pressure.

### **INTERPRETATION**

The study aimed to achieve three specific objectives. Firstly, it sought to assess teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, revealing that while all teachers possessed an understanding of the concept, there was a reluctance to implement it actively due to concerns about increased workload. Secondly, the investigation delved into teaching methods used in inclusive classrooms, uncovering a predominant use of traditional methods. However, the absence of suitable teaching aids, Braille books, and insufficient special needs education for teachers hindered the effective education of visually impaired students. Finally, the study explored challenges faced by teachers in implementing inclusive education, highlighting issues such as a lack of essential skills, inadequate teaching materials, insufficient government support, and a dearth of seminars for professional development. Overall, the study underscored the significant concerns surrounding classroom practices and the need for improved training and support for teachers in handling special students within inclusive classrooms.

### **OVERALL FINDINGS**

The researcher discovered the following based on the information she learned from the teachers:

- All the teachers are knowledgeable about inclusive education.
- Teachers may have knowledge, but they don't seem to be doing anything with it to shorten their workload or avoid adding to it.
- The majority of teachers still adhere to the traditional methods of instruction, such as lectures and question-and-answer sessions.
- Schools were receiving enough funding for inclusion-related expenses like in sufficient library materials for children with disabilities, modern, specialized teaching tools, infrastructure

improvements, etc.

- There aren't enough seminars available for teachers to attend to help them acquire new techniques for dealing with the kids in inclusive classes.
- A lack of cooperation between educators and parents in addressing problems with the children.
- A rigid curriculum.
- Lack of motivation on the part of teachers to address the needs of the exceptional children.

### **EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS**

Some of this study's educational ramifications include the following:

- Encourage teachers to put their expertise to use by encouraging the implementation of inclusive education.
- A flexible curriculum, a supportive emotional climate, a barrier-free environment, and attitude adjustment area necessary.
- Using cutting-edge technology
- Set high standards for alternative expectations that are appropriate for the student, such as by creating alternative evaluation methods.
- Recognize and assist pupils who require additional educational support.
- Make more seminars available to teachers on how to run inclusive classrooms.
- Manage the teacher-to-student ratio so that instructors can focus on the unique characteristics of each student by teaching less (Content) over a longer period of time.
- Make special pupils speak up more instead of working harder to break down barriers to communication.

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