

Teacher Preparation for Visually Challenged Students in Kerala

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Abstract: In an inclusive setup, teachers have a prominent role. A teacher should be of multi-skilled personality. Their attitude is important to become a perfect inclusive teacher. This paper investigates the essentials of teacher preparation for visually challenged students. The teacher preparation for a visually challenged student is taken as a subject or case. For the case study, the investigator chose the sample from the training Centre for teachers of visually challenged students in Palakkad. The purposive sampling method is used for the study. The investigator inquired about the process of teacher preparation for visually challenged students from the Head, faculties, and students of the institution. Findings of the study revealed that both normal and visually challenged students gained teacher training and they have got enough confidence and self-awareness from this course. Hence the present educational system should provide adequate opportunities to develop various skills for the teachers to transform them into true inclusive teachers.

Keywords: Visually Challenged, Teacher Preparation for Visually Challenged, Inclusive Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a process to improve the ability of the education system to reach out to all learners. It includes the transformation of school culture, policies, and activities so that they can adapt to the diversity of their local students. The attitude of everyone in the school, including administrators, teachers, and other students, should be optimistic for a school to be inclusive.

Teachers have an important role to play in an inclusive setup. Teachers have a prominent role to play in preparing students to take their place in society and the world of work and point out that teachers, in particular, need the skills required to recognize the unique needs of each pupil and to respond to them by developing a broad range of teaching strategies.

Preparing pre-service teachers to teach in multicultural environments is necessary if our schools are to genuinely teach all students in inclusive, collaborative, and diverse settings. To achieve this we must begin to plan and develop an environment of teamwork and inclusiveness at the level of pre-service, as well as activities that show prospective teachers the potential and promise of an inclusive world.

A common opinion exists between daily classrooms and subjects Teachers who have students with special needs in their educational system Classes are a tactic destined to fail. The concerns regarding the policy Include; diminish the needs of students with special education; The instructional time of teachers of students who are more likely to be teaching students with special needs requires advanced skills to succeed. Teaching ability and teachers are not qualified to have the specialized skills education that learners with special education needs require. Despite these beliefs, the evidence indicates the reverse. Evidence is given by Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw (2000) and Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan (2005) that Students of special education criteria that are included in the general Classroom education regularly takes advantage of such environments in separated and withdrawal environments relative to teachers.

Preparation of teachers for inclusion is critical as it is important. Various researchers (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009; Winzer & Mazurek, 2011) have established that general classroom teacher has a profound impact on the success of inclusive education. In the general teacher education, diplomas and degrees available nationwide and there is an optional 'special needs' paper to train and 'prepare' teachers to identify and diagnose disability. However, it is not an integral part of the training, and it does not train teachers to deal with diversity or challenge negative attitudes (Singal, 2005a). This reinforces the 'difference' of children with disabilities who, some believe, can only be taught by teachers qualified specifically for them (Singal, 2005a)

An inclusive teacher must be able to address all the needs of students with disabilities. Differently trained students have peculiar features so that the teacher needs to consider and modify the technique of their teaching accordingly. The investigator was attempting to research the teacher's readiness for the visual challenge. A training center for teachers of visually challenged students in Palakkad is the only institution for them in Kerala. It works under a non-governmental body called Kerala Federation of the Blind. Diploma in special education (visual impairment) recognized by the Indian Rehabilitation Council provided by that agency. It is under the supervision of the National Institute for the empowerment of persons with Visual Disabilities (Divyangjan).

II. METHODOLOGY

The case study approach is used for the study. Here the teacher's training for the visually impaired is taken as a subject or event. The total sample of students who completed the course is almost 480, which is why the investigator decided to pick a representative sample of about 48 students. The purposive sampling method is preferred by the investigator since only 30 trainees are learning at the same time. Members of the Alumni, the head of the institution, and the faculty are chosen as samples. The investigator obtained data from an interview with the head of the institution, faculties, and visually challenged student trainees and a focus group discussion with other students. Content analysis of the D.Ed. Special education (Visual Impairment) syllabus recognized by the Indian Rehabilitation Council was also carried out.

The investigator fixed the objective to follow the essentials for teacher preparation for visually challenged. They are the following

1. To study the process of teacher preparation for visually challenged students in Kerala.

The investigator attempted to find out the course's vision and intent. How to efficiently train teachers and what are the main variables that make a great instructor. These are the research questions to which the investigator should respond. To clarify the teacher training process, the investigators developed new themes.

The purpose of the D Ed Special Education course is to train special teachers to work in the following environments at primary and primary levels. (a) Special Schools, (b) Integrated/Inclusive establishment, and (c) Itinerant Program. This course began in 1992 at the Centre for the Training of Visually Impaired Teachers in Palakkad. Nearly 480 students from this institution are educated, which is the study population.

III. DISCUSSIONS

The investigators discussed the major findings of the present study. It is presented in the four main themes of the study.

Course details

The course details were analyzed by the investigators through content analysis of the syllabus of D.Ed. Special Education (Visual Impairment).Diploma in education with specialization of visually challenged which is a two-year program. It is recognized by the rehabilitation council of India. The course will enable pre-service teachers to acquire knowledge, develop competencies, and practice skills to impart education to children with special needs. It has the knowledge, skill, and attitude related objectives. This course consists of four core papers and additional papers about the specific disability area. Each paper will have a total of 90 hours for curriculum transaction. There is 4 semester in each year. The duration, of course, will be 220 days consisting of 1320 hours each year. Thus having a total of 2640 hours for theory and practicum. Students who have passed plus two/junior College are eligible for the course. The medium of instruction will be English/Malayalam. This course is recognized by the RCI. The syllabus is prepared by the national institute for visually challenged now it is known as Divyangjan. The special education teachers are prepared to become an inclusive teacher. So the recognized course is suitable for the same purpose.

Curriculum

The course coordinator and the head of the institution commented about the curriculum. The same curriculum is prescribed for these teacher trainees. The curriculum is capable of developing children's intellectual, personal, emotional, and social development. The curriculum is more flexible and easily adapted in the appropriate situation. Teacher trainees are both normal and visually challenged students. Curricular adaptations to learning materials and teaching approaches are used in proper time. The teacher for visually challenged should adopt consistent, realistic, and flexible planning and implementation. Special training should be given to those children like tactile training, pre braille training, and training in reading graphics, etc. textbook adaptations like textbooks in braille script, learning aids like Taylor frames, abacus, tactile maps the assistive technologies are used for the curriculum transaction. Curriculum framework is for all students are included in them. But some adaptations are required when the concern disability group was addressed. Here the visually challenged students have more adaptions needed in classrooms. Plus curriculum means the adapted or flexible

curriculum is more suitable for visually challenged students. The teachers are using the adapted assistive devices for their visually challenged students.

Examinations

The examination system is adequate for teacher preparation it is viewed in the interviews with both the sighted and visually challenged teacher trainees. The teaching practices are an important practical examination. Theory examinations are done in each semester. Internal and external exams are there. Seminars and assignment work are completed at the proper time. Individual Education Programme (IEP) also is good training and is examined by the teacher. Participants viewed this IEP training gives more confidence to them for becoming a teacher for visually challenged student. Each semester has written examination and practical also. 20 days of practice teaching is a must in each semester. Demonstration classes are there. Commission classes are observed by the external examiners and also checked the practical works, projects, teaching-learning materials, etc. Teacher trainees should have the examinations to check whether they are really modified as a teacher of visually challenged students. The perfect teacher should update their knowledge, teaching strategies and novice adaptive resources.

Skill development

Skill development is an inevitable part of teacher training. There are a lot of important skills that should be developed in a teacher. Additional skills like daily living skills of visually challenged, mobility training, recreational skills, etc. should be practiced well. More practical classes should be given to the trainees. As a project work, each student trainee should practice 2 skills for 4 students. Braille, Taylor frame, abacus should be trained in this course. Individual education program (IEP) is practiced well. Practical's are very much effective, braille in English and Malayalam, orientation and mobility, use of special appliances, practice teaching, and information communication technology, preparation of low-cost teaching-learning materials, preparation of teaching aids, project work, preparation of tactile maps, the teaching of daily living skills, teaching appliances, and community work these are the important practical works in this course. Teachers must multitalented and skills to handle the visually challenged teachers not only the teaching skill but also the daily living skills, etc. if the teacher should possess these skills the students also get it well through their classes. In this training program teacher trainees with sight they should train with blindfolds. They cover their eyes with tightly bound cloth and then travel in the busy road, It will help them how their students with visually challenged learn these skills without their sight. Skill development is the important area that should be focused in teacher training.

Teaching as profession

Teaching is not only a profession but also a devoted service. Each student with visually challenged must give consideration and has the right to study well and with the proper guidance of a teacher. Teacher trainees should get more confidence from this course to handle the visually challenged students in their class. Visually challenged trainees gave self-awareness and more clear answers to their daily life situations. To some extent, they should keep light in the minds of others through this profession. This course will help them to become a special education teacher or an inclusive teacher or an itinerant teacher. So today's teacher should be competent with thorough knowledge and having good teaching skills. An inclusive teacher also should train skill development program in their profession. Nowadays visually challenged students are going to inclusive classroom but they get little attention. Because teachers are not aware about how they can handle those students in their classroom. Itinerant teacher is only a part time teacher. They should not give proper care and support to a visually challenged student. One of the teacher trainee opined that the need of the hour is to become an inclusive teacher. The special teacher training are also in demand. Such faculties can made the direction for the teachers have visually challenged students in their classroom.

IV. FINDINGS

- It is the only training Centre for teachers of visually challenged in Kerala. It is situated in the Sreekrishnapuram Panchayath of Palakkad district.
- The rehabilitation council of India recognized syllabus is followed by the institution for teacher preparation for visually challenged.
- Normal Curriculum with suitable adaptations is designed for visually challenged
- Curricular adaptations require for every subject and made it is easy to use pre-training and another suitable assistive technology is used to make it effective.
- For mathematics concepts, Taylor frame and abacus and other software are used by the visually challenged students.
- The course duration is two years and have four semesters

- Teacher trainees got more confidence from this course to handle the visually challenged students in their classroom
- Visually challenged trainees gave self-awareness and more confidence to face the challenges of life.
- Taylor frames, abacus, tactile maps, etc. are very useful learning materials for visually challenged students.
- Teacher trainees should have got training in braille script.
- Individual education programs are very effective in this course.

V. CONCLUSION

Teacher training for the visually impaired is an important program for the institution that operates in the Palakkad district under the supervision of the National Institute for the empowerment of persons with Visual Disabilities (Divyangjan). To facilitate the skill acquisition of student trainees, this course must be offered. The instruction of their peers and their own lives is very beneficial to those visually impaired student trainees. The researchers suggest that in their teacher education programs, all teacher trainees in general education will have to get ample skill practice sessions for handling the children with disabilities. The teachers should provide in-service programs for equipping in the fields of differently abled students. In their classroom, an inclusive teacher will work with differently-abled students with professional standards. In every Block Resource Centre (BRC), there should be a team for professionals working for educational and health needs of children with special needs. So the inclusive teachers have to get proper training for the learning of skills and to preserve the spirit of the great profession as a teacher.

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