

CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

With the growing importance of equal opportunities for education for all, one of the important aims of schools has become to include students with special needs in the regular classrooms. The Government of India has enacted the legislation Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act-95) to achieve amongst other things, the goal of providing access to free education in an appropriate environment to all learners with disabilities till she or he attains the age of eighteen years. The Act endeavors to promote the integration of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools.

UNICEF's (2000) Report on the Status of Disability in India states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. The Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 2000) reports that of India's 200 million school-aged children (6-14 years), 20 million require special needs education. While the national average for gross enrolment in school is over 90 percent, less than five percent of children with disabilities are in school.

During the past 25 years, there has been an international interest in the inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools (Ballard, 1998), (Booth & Ainscow, 1998) and (Ainscow, 1999). In the past, children with special needs were educated in special schools and institutions separately from their peers. The perception that education should be provided to all children regardless of their differences and needs has led to the development of inclusive education. The philosophy of inclusion has been strengthened in the 1990s (e.g. UNESCO, 1994) and it promises to treat all children with special needs as individuals who have equal rights to education.

Inclusive education opposes the practice of separation and it is based on the notion of equity. Emphasis is given to the needs and rights of children, including their right to education. It accepts all children as they are, providing them with adequate resources and support according to their needs. When talking about integration, it refers to the integration of an individual into a school in which he or she was not previously accepted. Inclusive education does not simply refer to the placement of children with special needs into normal schools, but it is also concerned with the conditions under which all children can be educated effectively (Barton, 1997). Sebba and Ainscow (1996) define inclusive

education as the process with which schools try to respond to all pupils as individuals, reviewing the organization and provision of their curriculum.

Malini Sen (2007) reports that it is being increasingly felt that schools need to promote an education system that brings all learners into a common platform. The curriculum needs to be balance what is common for all and at the same time, take into account the individual needs of all the learners. The biggest challenge to inclusion of children with special needs is lack of awareness in school authorities, teachers. Most schools do not have the environment to make children with special needs feel, welcome. "Besides lack of resources and infrastructure, the current education system does not allow for individual development of children at their own pace. Teachers are unable to cope with difference in children, not because they do not want to, but due to lack of training to identify and work with children who are different. All this stems from lack of awareness," asserts Lilly Vishwanathan, Project manager, Plan India, Delhi.

In a typical Indian class of fifty children, children with special needs, fall outside the teacher's tolerance level. Secondly, their nondisabled peers do not accept these students. Thirdly, the reason children with special needs are especially vulnerable, particularly in the Indian milieu, is that teachers do not know how to deal with these children. There is a visible lack of teacher training. The RPWD Act, 2016 provides that "the appropriate Government shall ensure that the PWD enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others." The Government is to take steps to utilize the capacity of the PWD by providing appropriate environment.

In India, the government and NGOs are initiating measures to review and plan appropriate strategies for students with special needs and inclusive education. These measures include evolving policy guidelines, analyzing practices, developing teacher training programs, and creating resource persons and special teachers by establishing linkages to complement each other.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT, 2000) has recommended inclusive schools for learners with special educational needs by making appropriate modifications in the content, presentation and transaction strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures.

Vijaya Prema, head of the education department, Child Study Centre, Spastic Society of Karnataka, Bangalore (as cited in Malini Sen, 2007) feels that children with special needs can be part of mainstream education with early intervention. "If a child's specific learning difficulty can be detected by class III, then with right support of teacher he can overcome the difficulty by the times he reaches middle schools." Therefore, training for teachers at pre-primary and primary levels is most important.²In fact, such training should be given to pupil-teachers at the pre-service level. So that they are trained to cater children with special needs when they join the schools as a teacher.

Those working in the field of education feel that teacher-training program at B.Ed level requires a complete overhaul. "Teachers need to be sensitized and equipped to help students with different needs. Any innovation in teaching will benefit all learners." says Thakkar. (Malini Sen 2007)

With the need felt to train teachers for inclusive education, teacher-training course at B.Ed level have revised the curriculum and incorporated a paper on inclusive education. However, it has been kept as an elective to choose from and therefore, there are not many takers for this paper. Many Pupil-Teachers do not seem interested.

The goal of inclusion in schools is to create a world in which teachers and students are aware, knowledgeable and supportive of all other people. However, what is seen is that many teachers are not aware of information regarding inclusion and do not show a positive attitude towards it. What is needed in such a situation is to create awareness about inclusive education. The question now is how awareness can be created among Pupil-Teachers at the B. Ed level. If inclusive education program is incorporated for the Pupil-Teachers at B. Ed level, will it increase their awareness? These question as well as the researcher's personal interest in this area led to this study.

1.1 NEED OF THE STUDY

Programs launched internationally and nationally in the recent years have been able to make only a limited impact in terms of increasing the participation of children with disabilities in formal education. This situation needs to change in the near future, and a focused effort is required. Keeping in mind the large number of children whose needs must be addressed and the limited resources available, the best option is to promote

inclusive education. However, the question is how to throw light on the concept and make it acceptable in a country as large and diverse as India, with its multiple tracks offering inequitable schooling opportunities to different groups.

Malini Sen (2009) reports that many schools have few teachers to cater large number of students in each classroom. Because of this, many teachers are reluctant to work with children with disabilities. They consider it an additional workload.

Training for sensitization towards disability and inclusion issues, and how to converge efforts for effective implementation of programs, are important concerns. 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 types of disability.

The training of general teachers at pre-service and in-service levels should address the issue of education of children with disabilities, so that teachers are better equipped to work in an inclusive environment. Some of the issues in training that need to be addressed include the methodology to be adopted for identifying 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. The time has come to scale up successful experiments on teacher training.

Most research studies show that teachers, like the general public, have negative views on both disabled students and mainstreaming. Teachers have negative view to mainstreaming emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded students (Alexander and Strain 1978) and (Hannah and Pliner 1983). Lack of knowledge about disabilities, experience with disabled students, and training in teaching special needs students appear as major contributors of these attitudes. Therefore, pre-service and in-service training should be given for promoting positive view and facilitating skill acquisition. Additionally, training should address the stages of concern of the teachers involved, their degree of actual experience with inclusive education, to be most effective.

Support services for teachers with mainstreamed classes appear vital to teacher awareness. Having psychologists or special education teachers who can provide information and assistance on a specific disabled child, behavior management, or

teaching techniques, makes teachers more positive toward inclusive education (Hannah and Pliner 1983).

The roles the teachers today are very diverse and they need to understand their contribution towards making a good individual out of every student. There are different types of students in a class and the most challenging aspect of the teacher today is to handle the students with disabilities in school. Therefore, teacher needs to be made aware and trained for Inclusion. The responsibility to train teacher lies on the pre-service teacher education.

The present situation demands Pupil-Teachers become confident, competent, and skillful to handle any situation in inclusive setup. Hardly few teacher education colleges are aware and their focus is limited to theoretical lectures, but preparation of Pupil-Teachers for inclusion is seldom done, hence there is urgent need for programs, which will create awareness among teacher, parents and society.

The review of related literature has also reported that few researches have been done in the area of Inclusive Education in India. Teachers at pre-primary and primary level should have the awareness about different disabilities and inclusive education.

The present primary education teacher-training course hardly caters to such awareness. Hence, the researcher personal interest in this area and the urgency to make the Pupil-Teachers aware about inclusive education, the researcher felt the need for developing an inclusive education program to be implemented at B.Ed level. This would make Pupil-Teachers aware about inclusive education and thereby develop awareness towards inclusive education. It was also necessary to test the effectiveness of the program for developing awareness of inclusive education. Further, the effectiveness of the program for developing awareness towards inclusive education would also help in building confidence about its implementation at later stages. With this, in view the present study has been undertaken.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem is stated as follow, **“A Study of Awareness of Pupil-Teachers in Inclusive Education.”**

1.3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

A. Inclusive Education Conceptual Definition

Inclusive Education is defined as a system of education where students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities. (RPWD Act 2016)

Program: A plan of things that will be done or included in the development to launch research program or a training program for new staff or a program of economic reform. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

Operational Definition

For the purpose of the study Inclusive Education Programs defined as a plan, which is developed for training B.Ed Pupil-Teachers to create awareness towards inclusive education using various interactive teaching methods such as discussion, case studies, power point presentations, showing educational video films, conducting field visits and group work activities .

B. Awareness of Inclusive Education

Conceptual Definition

According to the dictionary, awareness means having knowledge of the existence of something. (Good C.V: Dictionary of Education (3d))

Operational Definition: For the purpose of the study, awareness of inclusive education was defined as the extent of knowledge and understanding among B.Ed Pupil-Teachers about the

1. Concept of Inclusive Education: includes the meaning, philosophy, objectives, characteristics, need and benefits of inclusive education.
2. Legal Aspects of Inclusive Education: means the historical perspective, current policies, educational and financial provision for children with special needs.
3. Basic Information about Disabilities: refers to the concept of impairment, disability, handicap, types, characteristics, symptoms, and causes of disabilities, approaches and techniques for identification of disabilities.

4. Skills and Competencies required for Inclusive Education: It means the skills and competencies required in planning and management of inclusive classroom, use of assistive devices for learner with special needs and creating barriers free environment.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To find out the Awareness of Pupil-Teachers toward Inclusive Education.
- 2) To find out the difference between male and female Pupil-Teachers regarding their awareness towards Inclusive Education.
- 3) To find out the difference between Arts and Science Pupil-Teachers Awareness towards Inclusive Education.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- 1) This research studies only awareness of Pupil-Teachers towards inclusive education other variables were not considered.
- 2) The awareness of inclusive education was studied considering the four components i.e. concept of inclusive education, legal aspects of inclusive education, basic information about disabilities and skills and competencies required for inclusive education.
- 3) The inclusive education paper was implemented colleges offering the B.Ed course.
- 4) Data was collected from first year and second year student-teachers at the B.Ed level studying at different colleges of education in Odisha.
- 5) The sample for the present study was both male and female Pupil-Teachers. The present study was limited to greater Odisha only.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The tool constructed by the researcher includes use of multiple options. This may sometime result in curtailing the freedom of the Pupil-Teachers in expressing themselves. The Pupil-Teachers did not get scope for personal comment. As it is a close end questionnaire, factors like motivation, fatigue and interest would also affect the responses of the Pupil-Teachers.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the present study, the researcher has developed one tool. awareness of inclusive education questionnaire. These research tools will be a readymade source for future researchers who wish to conduct similar type of studies. The plans prepared by the researcher will prove to be a guide to other researchers and educational institutions who wish to develop awareness of inclusive education among teachers.

The study would develop an awareness of inclusive education in Pupil-Teachers at B.Ed level. This knowledge, which the B.Ed Pupil-Teachers have gained, would help them to manage teaching-learning effectively in an inclusive setup in schools. It will further help them to share their knowledge with colleagues in schools as well as the prospective Pupil-Teachers, which in turn would help them to bring about a change in their view towards inclusive education. It will also enable the Pupil-Teachers to rethink and modify their teaching strategies in the inclusive classroom as per the needs of the children. Thus, this study will help to develop an interest among B.Ed Pupil-Teachers to learn more about inclusive education.

It is hoped that it can be used in developing awareness of inclusive education and a positive view towards inclusive education at other teacher education levels, such as E.C.C.E, D.El.Ed as well as at the postgraduate levels i.e. M.Ed

To understand the students with special needs in the general schools as well as in the inclusive setup, training of teachers is necessary. The program developed can be used in schools to train in-service teachers at pre-primary and primary level.

This can be done with help the Principal or Head of the institution and seminars, workshops and lectures can be conducted.

This study would also highlight the need for having specially trained teachers for students who require special attention and education. As support services vary by schools, general education teachers may get support for instruction in their classrooms from special educators.

This study will help the curriculum framers to understand the needs of the teachers and students in inclusive setup. It will enable them to also bring about desirable changes in syllabus, practical training and evaluation. Hence, an inclusive education program can be incorporated as a part of the curriculum at pre-service as well as in-service levels.

This study will also help educators, teachers, students, and the community to understand that including children with special needs in school will improve the quality of life for all. Schools are important places for children to develop friendships and learn social skills from each other, because all children learn by being together. When children attend classes and activities that reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world, they would learn to appreciate diversity. In order to appreciate the big picture of inclusion, people must envision an outcome that they would want for themselves or for their own child. This study would pave way for further research in areas of concern, as suggested by the results of the study.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the study by clearly stating the problem, its aims, objectives and hypotheses. The need felt to undertake the study, that led to identifying and operationalizing of the main terms has been discussed. The scope and delimitations as well as limitations that restricted the study have been given. Besides the significance of the study that may help to add to already existing knowledge base in this area have been given.