

## Knowledge of Inclusive Education among Secondary School Teachers in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh

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### ABSTRACT

Education is essential for fostering development, personal growth, and reducing poverty, regardless of challenges like disability. Teachers play a crucial role at every stage by helping children and youth reach their full potential physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, morally, and spiritually. Inclusive education ensures that children with different abilities can learn and participate equally with others in their community. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of secondary school teachers on implementing inclusive education to enhance the quality of education in government schools in Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh. It also sought to identify factors that may influence the adoption of inclusive practices in schools. The research used a mixed-method approach, grounded in behaviourism theory, with data collected from 300 teachers through questionnaires, interviews, and observations, using purposive and random sampling techniques. Quantitative data were analysed with SPSS, while qualitative data were gathered from open-ended questionnaires and focus group interviews with teachers. The results showed that many teachers were willing to implement inclusive education, but their understanding varied based on gender, location, teaching experience, qualifications, and the number of training sessions they had attended. The study recommends providing ongoing training for teachers on the importance of inclusive education and their role in fostering it. This would improve their perspective and ability to support children with special needs (CwSN) in an inclusive classroom environment.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Children with Special Needs (CwSN), Knowledge, and Behaviourism*

Inclusive education is advocated as an education system based upon humanistic values, nurturing a singular learning environment for ‘All’ children which will eventually pave way towards creating a united world that embraces disparities. Inclusive Education means a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and teaching learning process is suitably adapted to meet the different learning of students with disabilities. (RPWD Act, 2016).

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Inclusive Education focuses upon educating all children in the same environment, with schools ensuring a barrier free environment and resources (resource room and resource teacher etc.) in accordance to its student's requirement. World Education Forum (2015) campaigned Twenty First Century Education as 'Education of all and by all'. It advocated that United Nations propagate twenty first Century as The Century of Equity and Equality. Inclusive education is child centred approach, a humanistic way and economical approach to education (UNICEF, 2012).

Rao (2003) believed Inclusive Education as the only way in developing a congenial and barrier free environment to recognise the potential and capacities of 'all' children to the best of their abilities in accordance to their needs. Thus, Inclusive Education is not a destination but a process to enable all the students with education, confidence and skills so that they become contributing member of society. Psychologically, Inclusive Education is a child centred approach where schools, curriculum, teaching methodology, teacher all work in accordance to the child's needs and requirements. It embraces that no two children understand or learn at the same pace because every child has needs specific to him or her irrespective of ability or disability. The only added feature in Children with Special Needs is that the basic needs are cumulated by the needs aroused due to the specific disability. Barton (1997) further intensified the changes required in the education system, be it the perception and acceptance of schools/ teachers/policy makers towards CWSN as part of mainstream education system. He strongly believed that unless schools are open to the inclusive policy and are willing to change, inclusive education shall remain a distant dream. In compliance to Len Barton; CBR Network (2005) reinforced the curricular changes, teacher skill development, disability sensitive teaching methodology and barrier free school ambience as the four prime changes required in every inclusive school.

Thus, according to Ainscow (1999) Inclusion is a process which involves sequenced values, principles, and practices for social metamorphosis of education system all over the world. There is no blueprint or fixed path to be followed. Wood (1998) opined that inclusion is a global policy for local problems. He further elaborated that the idea of: 'What is Inclusive Education has been bombarded by the various international organizations. But questions like: 'Where inclusion can occur?' and 'How to implement Inclusive Education?' are to be answered locally. Stainback & Stainback (1989) while discussing diversity stated that every society has unique diversity. For example: America experiences a substantial percentage of racial diversity be it Latinos, African Americans, Asians etc. However, India experiences diversity very different from America in the form of religion, region, linguistic, caste etc. Thus, inclusion of diversity in the education system has to be devised by the local government. Despite the varied diversity the core of inclusive policy remains intact i.e. to encompass all students/ children including CWSN into the umbrella of a unified education system.

Teachers in specific in an educational setup are required to support children with different challenges in their regular class rooms so they can access the curriculum and become actively involved in the school community. It is believed that for inclusion to be successful, school children ought to have full participation, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other needs, as it took place in Spain (Salamanca Statement, 1994). According to the Universal Elementary Education, children would access schools nearer to their families so that they could be monitored easily even when they do not have any disability. Therefore, inclusion of children with disabilities is a step towards achieving

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the goal of children with disabilities in the education system. Children with special needs ought to be members of the group or class in their school when they participate fully like any other members of the group or class. The emphasis then was on the need to reform education systems, which is possible only if mainstream schools become capable of educating all children in their local communities. However, this Declaration was exclusively directed towards students with disabilities. It is only recently that inclusive education has begun to be understood as necessary for all the young learners by responding to current challenges implied by increasing diversity in the classroom and larger society (Ainscow, 2019). Any educational system ought to define inclusive education, providing platform to understand the possibility in terms of benefits and costs for individuals and societies.

Education plays an important role in facilitating development, personal growth, and eradication of poverty, regardless of barriers of any kind, including disability. The teacher at any stage is expected to nurture and bring out the best in the child and youth and help them to realize their maximum in physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual potential. The teacher education system should ensure adequate supply of professionally trained teachers to guide and facilitate those who study in schools and institutions of higher learning. The main concern is therefore to build teacher capability to translate curricular objectives into appropriate learning experiences for children to enable them to acquire the desired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aptitudes. However, other studies have shown that even after completing staff development training, many teachers still not serious of their ability to teach students with disabilities, and prepared to provide with resources and necessary support for the programs of inclusive education (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Kearney & Durand, 1992). However, few researchers have stated that the implementation of Inclusive Education programme had never evaluated in primary schools. The status report of India shows that we must go a long way in the Universalization of Elementary Education, especially to access education for different categories of children with disabilities.

India had been no exception to the worldwide exclusion of People with Disability in every platform of society over the centuries. In India, numerous superstitions had engulfed disability and the disabled since time immemorial. Thus, imparting education to people/ children with disability had been out of question. It was as late as nineteenth century when Christian Missionaries opened first blind school in Amritsar, thus establishing the first special school in the country. Yet in a vast country like India opening of few special schools were insignificant as compared to the huge population of disabled. Post independence many national level institutions were established namely: National Institute of Visually Handicap (NIVH), National Institute of Mentally Handicap (NIMH) etc along with numerous special schools across the country. Yet, the population of out of school CWSN defeated the special schools established. The reason established being the negative attitude of society towards disability and the lack of awareness towards benefit of education for CWSN (Babik, & Gardner (2021).

Human civilization is more than two thousand years old. The evolutionary process has moved from exclusion to discrimination to acceptance to merger to finally celebrating the differences. The millennial citizens of the world aspire for an inclusive society where everyone enjoys Fundamental Human Rights. We cannot deprive any section of population from their basic rights like Right to live with dignity, Right to Education just because they belong to specific gender/ race/ ethnicity/ religion or disability category. It can be only

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achieved if since beginning we are bombarded with a diverse environment. A child who grows up with an understanding and respect towards the differences among individuals will create and thrive in an inclusive society (Singhal, 2006). For all these goals to be achieved, Inclusive Education is the answer. 'Research revealed better scholastic and non-scholastic results in an education system which embraces inclusion. It highlights benefit to both the CWSN and peer. Psychologically, scientist proved that the relationship nurtured in an inclusive school have far reaching consequences in personality development of children both CWSN and Peer. Few benefits mentioned are: enhanced personal value, friendships, social skills, comfort level etc. While CWSN blossom into a more confident and positive personality the peer on the other hand develops empathy with acceptance and understanding of diverse individual needs' (Singh, 2014). A lot of effort has been manifested towards building an inclusive society both nationally and internationally to bring the marginalised group into mainstream society. Thus, inclusive education is the building block of future society and schools are the social laboratories. Hence, the schools of twenty first century must embrace all students and provide quality education to all its students, thus meeting their diverse needs.

### ***Objectives:***

- To assess the level of knowledge secondary school teachers, possess regarding inclusive education for children with special needs (CwSN) in imparting behavioural skills.
- To identify and categorize the most effective practices in government training programs on inclusive education for CwSN, specifically in developing behavioural skills.

### ***Hypothesis:***

- To Knowledge the above-mentioned objectives the following hypotheses were formulated.
- There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge among secondary school teachers regarding inclusive education for children with special needs (CwSN) in imparting behavioural skills, based on factors such as gender, locality, years of teaching experience, professional qualifications, and the number of training sessions attended

## **METHODOLOGY**

For purposes of the present study, 300 samples were collected from Government secondary schools in Nellore district, by using a varied method approach and was guided by behaviourism theory. Respondents were sampled by purposive and random sampling techniques. The samples included secondary school teachers, Data were gathered using questionnaire and interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2.0 and thematic analysis method for qualitative data.

### ***Procedure***

The present research was shown secondary school teachers in urban, semi urban, and rural areas of Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, India. This research was done in two sessions; the first session was used to develop rapport with teachers, head masters and district education officer concerned. They were informed about the broad purpose of the study and were requested to cooperate. In the second session each subject was met in person and was

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given research tool was explained clearly about it and asked to fill the applicable socio-demographic characteristics followed by the questions. It was also made clear to them that their responses and identity would be kept confidential. It was crisscross that all the statements are responded by the respondents. After collecting required data from respondents, the scoring of the obtained data was done. Appropriate statistical tests like mean, standard deviation “t” test was used to check the difference between variables. The interpretations of the results obtained are as follows.

**Table-1: The Mean, SD, and “t” value level of knowledge secondary school teachers, possess regarding inclusive education for children with special needs (CwSN) in imparting behavioural skills**

Sl.No	Category	N	Mean (SD)	t value
1.	<b>Gender</b>			
	a. Male	146	36.88(3.87)	1.964*(a-b)
	b. Female	154	38.98(4.08)	
2.	<b>Marital Status</b>			
	a. Married	288	38.40(3.97)	-.365(a-b)
	b. Unmarried	12	38.83(4.64)	
3.	<b>Locality</b>			
	a. Rural	249	38.30(4.13)	-.799(a-b)
	b. Semi-Urban	13	39.23(3.53)	-2.698**(c-b)
	c. Urban	38	37.29(6.24)	-5.158**(c-a)
4.	<b>Experience</b>			
	a. 1-10 years	81	38.36(4.61)	1.971*(a-b)
	b. 11-20 years	118	36.81(5.96)	1.967*(c-b)
	c. 20 and above	101	38.27(4.86)	-.128@(c-a)
5.	<b>Education</b>			
	a. B.A. M.A., B.Com	185	36.70(6.15)	-1.968*(a-b)
	b. B.Sc., M.Sc., (Science+Maths)	115	38.08(5.48)	
6.	<b>Professional</b>			
	a. D.Ed./TTC	35	39.17(4.62)	4.561**(a-b)
	b. B.Ed.	200	33.04(8.44)	1.969*(b-c)
	c. M.Ed.	28	36.32(8.71)	2.001**(c-d)
	d. Other(HPT, TPT, B.PEd)	37	31.92(8.84)	4.669**(a-c)
<b>** P&lt;0.01; * P&lt;0.05</b>				

**Table1:** shows the level of knowledge secondary school teachers, possess regarding inclusive education for children with special needs (CwSN), secondary school female teachers mean level of knowledge score is 38.98, male secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 36.98 obtained t value 1.96 which clearly indicating that female secondary teacher have high level of knowledge compare the male secondary school teachers, it indicating that there is gender difference in level of knowledge secondary school teachers.

Married secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 38.40, Unmarried secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 38.83 obtained t value -.365 which clearly indicating that there is no difference in level of knowledge secondary school teachers in relation to their marital status.

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Living in rural area secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge mean score is 38.30, living in Semi-Urban area secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge mean score 39.23 and living in Urban area secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge mean score is 37.29, when compare to obtained t values it clearly indicating that there is no difference in level of knowledge secondary school teachers in relation their locality of residence.

Regarding 1-10 years teaching experience secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 38.36 , 11-20 years teaching experience secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 36.81 , 20 and above years teaching experience secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 38.27, when compare obtained t values it shows that 1-10 years teaching experience and 11-20 years teaching experience level of knowledge secondary school teachers is differ 1-10 years' experience is had good understanding level compare the 11-20 years teaching experience and 20 years above teaching experience teacher have no difference in level of knowledge , it clearly indicating that there no significant difference in level of knowledge secondary school teachers, possess regarding inclusive education for children with special needs (CwSN). When B.A. M.A., B.Com education qualification secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 36.70 B.Sc., M.Sc.,(Science+Maths) education qualification secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 38.09 obtained t value -.1.9685 which clearly indicating that there is no difference in level of knowledge secondary school teachers in relation to their education qualification . D.Ed./TTC professional training secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 39.17, B.Ed professional training secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 33.04 , M.Ed professional training secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 36.32 . Other(HPT, TPT, B.PEd) professional training secondary school teachers mean level of knowledge score is 31.92.obtained t value is 4.561 it clearly indicating that there is a difference in level of knowledge among the D.Ed./TTC and B.Ed. who did the D.Ed./TTC professional training secondary school teachers had high levels of knowledge compare the B.Ed teacher and also indicating that who had done Other(HPT, TPT, B.PEd) professional training had good level of knowledge secondary school teachers, possess regarding inclusive education for children with special needs (CwSN)

### CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the importance of specialized training in improving secondary school teachers' knowledge about inclusive education for children with special needs. It reveals that female teachers generally possess a higher level of understanding compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, teachers who have undergone D.Ed./TTC training demonstrate significantly greater knowledge than those with B.Ed. qualifications. In contrast, factors such as marital status, locality, and general teaching experience do not appear to significantly affect knowledge levels. These findings underscore the need for targeted professional development programs that cater to teachers' specific needs, thereby enhancing educational outcomes for children with special needs

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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