

Teacher Preparation for Inclusive Education- Intervention of NEP 2020

*¹Lovely Sarkar and ²Dr. Surendra Yadav

¹Ph. D. Research Scholar, Department of Teacher Education, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema


²Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema

Abstract

Inclusive education is an integral part of teacher education. As NEP 2020 focuses on equitable and inclusive education, it has broadened the umbrella of inclusive education to include Children with Special Needs (CWSN) as well as the socio-economically disadvantaged, thus, aiming to achieve equity, accessibility, right to education and quality education. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) has highlighted the importance of teacher's competence, skills and knowledge for learner's achievement and quality education for inclusion. Thus, it is an increasing challenge for teachers to be trained and equipped to teach in an inclusive set up. Inclusive education in teacher education program involves many challenges that need to be addressed in order to ascertain that the teachers are equipped to accommodate students with diverse needs and create a safe and supportive environment for learning. Hence, this paper aims to review the challenges of teacher education program in implementing inclusive education. It attempts to find out the intervention of NEP 2020 in relation to Inclusive Education for addressing the challenges faced in teacher preparation. It also suggests measures for teacher preparation.

Keywords: *Teacher preparation, Inclusive education, equity, challenges, quality*

Article Publication

 Published Online: 31-Dec-2023

*Author's Correspondence

 Lovely Sarkar

 Ph. D. Research Scholar,
Department of Teacher Education,
Nagaland University, Kohima
Campus, Meriema

 deylovely4@gmail.com

© 2023 The Authors. Published by International Research Journal of Educational Psychology. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND



license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Introduction

According to UNESCO (1994) inclusive education is a process of inclusion of diverse learners in educational system from various backgrounds irrespective of the culture, communities etc. It refers to the process of removing 'exclusion'. Thus, the focus is on 'inclusivity'. Inclusive education considers right to education for all as the basic human right which celebrates diversities. It means giving space for all kinds of learners.

Teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring inclusive education by fostering an environment where every student feels valued, respected, and supported. Teacher training programs can effectively prepare educators for inclusive classrooms. Teacher Education program in inclusive education requires understanding diverse learners, creating inclusive classrooms, adapting teaching methods, and collaborating with other professionals to support students with special needs and thus, facilitating every kind of learners. It includes practical experiences and strategies for addressing various learning styles and abilities within the classroom.

NCFTE (2009) mentions that for achieving inclusion teachers need to be highly skilled and accountable and be responsible enough for creating a congenial atmosphere for all types of learners. Teacher Education is a program that trains the prospective teachers to be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding about the techniques and strategies of teaching and learning process. It prepares the upcoming teachers to face the challenges in the classrooms and become efficient in their profession. For inclusion, teacher training program should prepare the teachers in such a way that they are equipped at dealing with the students with or without difficulties. Hence, for inclusion teacher training program needs to be taken care of.

Role of Teacher Education Program in Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education

NEP 2020 has pointed out the degrading quality of teacher education which is much to be desired. Keeping this in mind, it recommends for continuous professional development, career management and progression for the teachers. It emphasized that teachers have a dominant role to play in creating an inclusive atmosphere of the school. Developing a positive attitude is of utmost importance in order to embrace inclusion. Teacher Education needs to play an indispensable role in developing teachers who understand and implement inclusive education in India. This policy also mentions about quality education for all without any discrimination which leads to holistic education.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the challenges of teacher education program in implementing inclusive education for teacher preparation.
2. To find out the interventions of NEP 2020 in Teacher preparation for Inclusive Education.
3. To suggest measures for promoting inclusive education through teacher preparation.

Literature Review

For this study, various documents related to inclusive education, articles, reports of various commissions and committees etc. have been reviewed which have been presented below.

Das et. al. (2013) investigated into the skills of the teachers in Delhi to deal with children with disabilities. The findings reveal that 70% of the teachers neither have any training nor any experience in teaching children with difficulties. The teachers find themselves incompetent and not adequately trained in deal with such students.

Bansal (2016) identifies the gaps in teacher education programs in India and mentions that the theory part of inclusion is overemphasized. This leads to the neglect of the practical aspects. The researcher emphasizes on the need to reform the approaches of teacher education programs to meet the challenges of inclusion.

Kumari & Nayan (2018) examined the status of teacher-training program for the preparation of teachers for inclusive classrooms. This study mentions about the ongoing challenges in teacher education program for fostering inclusive education. The study points out that awareness about inclusive education in India is still at its infancy.

Massouti (2019) investigated into the issues of teacher education program for inclusion. The findings reveal that some of the prominent issues are related to funding, organizational and instructional strategies. This study argues that the support system for inclusive education should be strengthened so that all diverse learners can be benefitted. It advocates changes in the pedagogical approaches for facilitating all types of learners.

Saikia & Sarmah (2019) examined the inclusive practices of the teachers in the schools of Assam. The researchers argued that orientation of the teachers in inclusive education is a must for providing quality education. It has been found that training given to the teachers is for short term which is not so effective. Hence, this study emphasizes that the training program for inclusive education should be considerably for long-term and should be ongoing.

Joshi (2020) mentions that inclusive education is not a necessary component in pre-service teacher training program and hence, the teachers are not trained adequately in inclusive education. Besides this, teacher training programs fail to give practical knowledge and understanding about inclusion and that theory part is overemphasized.

Anand & Lall (2022) mention about teachers limited understanding about inclusion in education. The study points out the concerns of the teachers that the children without any difficulties missed parts of the syllabus and could not do well in exams. Getting along with the children with special needs in the same classroom, the children without any difficulties scored very less as compared to what they are actually capable of. Thus, this study points

out that accommodating all kinds of learners with or without difficulties has serious effect on the academics of the children who do not face any difficulties.

The review of literature mentioned above point out that there are myriads of issues and challenges with regard to inclusive education. Preparation of teachers for inclusive education is a critical process which needs proper attention Some of the key challenges have been mentioned below.

Challenges in preparation of teachers

Teacher education institutions face innumerable challenges in the process of preparing teachers for inclusion. Some of the challenges are -

1. Gap between theory and practice

Although inclusive education is included in the B.Ed. curriculum, studies have pointed out that the emphasis is on the theoretical aspects. Teacher education programs fail to equip the teachers with the practical skills needed for inclusion. Even after the completion of two-year B.Ed. program, teachers feel that they are not skilled in dealing with classrooms having diverse learners.

2. Time and Resource Constraints

Teacher preparation programs often face constraints in terms of time and resources, which can make it difficult to provide extensive training in inclusive education. Limited funding, staffing, and instructional time restrict the amount of coursework and practical experience devoted to inclusive practices, leaving teachers underprepared to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teachers feel that they are not fully equipped for teaching students having diverse needs due to absence of resources like equipment, materials education and lack of knowledge and skills.

3. Lack of specialized training for prospective teachers in inclusive education

Specialized training is not provided to the prospective teachers in teacher education program that is required to prepare them for the inclusive classrooms. Inclusive classrooms demand a variety of teaching methodologies in order to cater to the needs of the students with or without difficulties. But teacher education program fails to provide adequate training to the teachers as per the needs of the inclusive classrooms.

4. Inadequate support system

Studies have shown that teacher education program do not provide adequate support to the students in terms of allocation of resources, moral support etc. Supportive environment should be created for the students in order to ensure inclusive education.

5. Apprehensions of the teachers and the school heads

This is one of the most important issues that create barriers in inclusive education. There are recurrent apprehensions in the educators as to how the children with difficulties are going to manage in the regular classrooms, how the results will be, the fear that these children will take away all the time of the classrooms, they will be unmanageable etc. These apprehensions create negative attitude in the teachers. Not only the teachers but also the head of the institutions are apprehensive that the results of the schools will be affected due to the poor academic performances of the students who face various types of disabilities.

6. Attitudinal barriers

Attitudes play the most important role in determining the effectiveness of the inclusive classroom. It is found that negative attitude of the institutional heads, the teachers, the children without difficulties etc. create barriers for the inclusive classrooms. Most importantly, teacher education program is not able to change the attitudinal barriers and biases of the teachers.

7. Inadequate professional development

There is lack of professional development among the teaching community. This has serious issues as the teachers are not updated on the recent developments in the field of education including the universal design for learning, differentiated instruction etc. When the teacher educators themselves are not updated on the latest innovations in the field of inclusive education, they are not able to cater to the diverse needs of the children with difficulties and also cannot do justice to the profession.

8. Lack of awareness

Studies have shown that in India, awareness about inclusive education is still at its infancy. This leads to serious issues one of which is non-acceptance of the learners with the disabilities in the mainstream schooling.

Interventions of NEP 2020

NEP 2020 envisions to revamp Teacher Education in various ways. It has introduced Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP) by offering courses for B.A. B.Ed., B.Sc. B.Ed. and B.Com. B.Ed. It will focus on teacher preparation for 4 stages namely- Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary Stages.

Apart from other changes, ITEP Curriculum structure will focus on 18 weeks of internship and rigorous teaching practice, Special Education and Inclusive teaching will also be taken care of. There will be emphasis on experiential learning opportunities for the student-teachers by linking theoretical knowledge with enhanced practical learning. Hence, the gap between theory and practical knowledge of inclusive education will be bridged by NEPs intervention.

This policy mentions that short- term courses after B.Ed. certification will be available for those who are interested in Special Education. It also emphasizes about the need for appointment of special educators in schools and the dire need for training the teachers not only for acquiring knowledge and understanding about special education but also the skills needed to understand the requirements of the children with various types of disabilities. Thus, this kind of specialized training in inclusive education for the prospective teachers will boost teacher preparation in the field of inclusion.

NEP 2020 notices the existing gaps and disparities particularly prevailing for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups. In order to bridge the gaps, it emphasizes that all type of learners should be included in the regular classrooms. This will ensure that every child gets the chance to learn and shine.

The meticulous planning of NEP 2020 for preparation of the prospective teachers is commendable. However, in the process of the execution of the planning there will be innumerable challenges. Hence, this paper suggests some strategies for successful implementation of inclusive education in preparation of teachers. The following strategies can be adopted.

Suggestions

1. Mechanism to build strong support system need to be made within the school complex to discuss the challenges and share strategies for accommodation and modification of curriculum to create an Inclusive Education System.
2. Inclusive Pedagogy Courses should be included in Pre-service training that includes teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL), and cooperative learning. These courses should emphasize practical techniques for accommodating diverse learning needs and fostering an inclusive classroom environment.
3. Collaboration is needed among the stakeholders of education in order to address the issues in teacher preparation.
4. Rapport building is very important in order to ensure inclusive classrooms. Teachers need to build good rapport with the students in order to build inclusive culture.

5. Ongoing teacher professional development program is the need for inclusivity in education.
6. Seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized time to time in order to orient the teachers to understand diversity in all its forms. This will enhance the understanding of the teachers about inclusive classrooms and also help them to stay updated.
7. Inclusive teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches should be adopted to accommodate diverse learners.
8. Internship program for inclusive schools should focus on building more empathetic relationship with the students for better understanding of CWSN.
9. Acceptance is the key for inclusivity. With acceptance of the learners with disabilities in a classroom with learners without disabilities attitudinal barriers can be removed and with the change of the attitude, many issues can be resolved. Empathy and not sympathy is the need for acceptance.

Conclusion

A good teacher education program can undoubtedly leverage the education system by ensuring that all students without discrimination receive quality education. If teachers are trained properly in inclusive education, they will see inclusion as their basic duty and not as an extra burden. Both pre-service and in-service teacher education program should offer opportunities for developing inclusive learning and practices. Ongoing professional development programs for inclusivity is the need of the hour in order to remove disparities and accommodate all types of learners with or without difficulties. There can be no improvement in education unless the challenges in teacher preparation for inclusive education are resolved. Hence, teacher preparation should be taken seriously so that the prospective teachers as well as those who are already in the profession can be adequately trained to face the challenges of today's classrooms.

References

- [1] Bansal, S. (2016). *Teacher Education Programmes Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Classrooms: A North India Context*. Journal of Disability Management and Rehabilitation, 2(2), p- 83-90.
- [2] Bansal, S. (2018). *Understanding Teachers' Perspective of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs (CWSN)*. Educational Quest: An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Science: Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 115-123.
- [3] Das, A., K. Kuyini, A.B. & Desa, I. P. (2013). Inclusive Education in India: Are the Teachers Prepared? International Journal of Special Education Vol.1 28, No: 1, p- 27-36.
- [4] Ghosh, P. (2021). *Teacher Training Program to Foster Inclusive Education in the Indian Public Schools - An Evaluation*. International Journal of Management (IJM). ISSN: 0976-6510 Volume 12, Issue 3, March 2021, pp.638-643.
- [5] Kumari, P. & Nayan, R. (2018). *Focusing Inclusive Education in Teacher Training Programmes in India.*, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT). ISSN: 2320-2882. P-279-284.
- [6] Massouti, A. (2019). *Rethinking Teacher Education for Inclusion: A Literature Review*. Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education Volume 10, Issue 1, p- 160-168.
- [7] National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009). National Council for Teacher Education 2009. Retrieved from: https://ncte.gov.in/website/PDF/NCFTE_2009.pdf
- [8] National Education Policy 2020, Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI Report.
- [9] Saikia, P & Sarmah, B. (2019). *A Study on Perception of the School Teachers towards Inclusive Education and Need of Teacher's Training for Inclusive Education*. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR). ISSN-2349-5162, Volume 6, Issue 6, p- 911-914.
- [10] UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, Paris: UNESCO.