

APPRAISAL OF CURRENT SITUATION OF SOUTHERN PUNJAB ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: AN ACUITY OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the appraisal of current situation of southern Punjab about inclusive education. Quantitative paradigm was used to conduct this research. Teachers of government schools of southern Punjab were considered as a population of this research. Purposive sampling technique was used to conduct this research and 123 teachers of district Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh were selected as a sample of this study. Indigenous scale was developed to collect the data. Numerical rating scale (reliable at Cronbach's alpha= .958) was used in this research. Data was analyzed through SPSS and parametric statistics were used to analyze the results. It is found that no significant difference among the respondents ($f: .430$, Sig: .827) based on their experience, whereas, there is a significant difference among the respondents ($f: 5.605$, Sig: .005) based on their qualification and there is a significant difference among the respondents ($f= 5.605$, Sig= .005) of different districts. It is recommended that Follow up activities should be planned to estimate the progress of students with special needs in inclusive education program in southern Punjab.

Key words: Inclusive Education, Teachers, Southern Punjab, Current Situation.

Background

Inclusive education is around removing the obstacles that keep people out of the education system. This concept has arisen as an important theme in education policy worldwide and is an essential section of the Sustainable Development Goals. In Pakistan context, definition of inclusive education is still on developing stage and currently emphasizes most on providing schooling to children with disabilities through special education structure. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) distinguishes the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities (PWDs). It encourages, defend and guarantee the full and equal pleasure of all human rights and fundamental liberties by all PWDs, and to encourage respect for their inherent self-worth. The article 24 of CRPD further emphasizes, inclusive education is a basic human right for every PWDs. Inclusive education structure is one that lodges all students as per their skills or needs and at all stages preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and lifelong knowledge (UNCRPD, 2006).

According to Krischler, Powell and Cate (2019), with reference to the specified individualized, inclusive education can be defined that learners with special educational needs can vigorously participate in the lesson as well as for the purpose of achieving the educational goals, they get endowment in classroom so that apprentices with special educational needs can get benefit from the guidelines in their inclusive classroom as well as pupils with special educational needs are adored. With reference to the general individualized, inclusive education can be defined to meet the needs of all kind of students, whether these needs are social needs or academic needs. For this purpose, all scholars vigorously participate during the lesson. All type of students get support in classroom as well as all kinds of students get benefit from the tutoring in classroom. Dreyer (2017) discussed in her study that inclusive education focuses on enclosure in education as well as inclusion in educational institutions. In these days, in the field of education, two most common and essential concepts are being focused. First one is that inclusive education has the mission of distinction in teaching and the second one is that a very deep effort is to make for the purpose of making the availability of equal prospects for all kind of learners. Inclusive education is such a deep concept that emphasizes on supporting all types of pupils, the persons who are dealing with the students as well as the system in which whole process is going on so that complete assortment of learning needs may be addressed.

UNICEF (2017) also focused to understand the article No. 24 of the UNCRC under the document "Inclusive Education". As per Salamanca Statement (1994), it has been said that the basic code of an inclusive school is that all children should learn collectively, wherever possible, irrespective of their problems or differences. Inclusive schools must identify and reply to the varied needs of their students, taking into account both the dissimilar learning styles and rates and appropriate curriculum, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, use of resources and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of supports and services to match each school's continuum of special needs.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973 as amended in 2012 delivers a comprehensive program for non-discrimination in education under Article 26. In 2005, the Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education was retained by the federal administration and all provincial administrations. The Declaration delivers a working definition of inclusive education as a procedure "to guarantee that all children, irrespective of sex, capability, disability and socio-economic status, cultural and folkloric background, be preserved with equal access to education, health services, work and all other features of life; are able to grow their complete educational, physical, expressive and social possibility; via appropriate media and technical tools; access to educating materials; and build sureness in your skills, abilities and future forecasts."

National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 declared, disabled children are mentioned to as 'handicapped' children. Although the terminology used was tough and alongside inclusive language, the policy meant to match access to schooling by providing special amenities for girls as well boys, privileged/disadvantaged groups and disabled children and adults. But the policy does not provide a clear strategy for this determination, separately from encouraging inclusive and child-friendly education, inclusion of PWDs in mainstream education, literacy and technical and vocational education programs.

Article 25A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan mandates that the government shall deliver free and necessary education to all children between the ages of five and sixteen years and shall make necessary arrangements for this purpose. The Government shall, in prescribed manner, provide or cause to be provided adequate education to a child with disability or a special child. As per Hanif et al. (2022), human rights are another approach to inclusive education, and peer acceptance should be one of the core meanings of school education to promote self-esteem and a higher quality of life for people with disabilities. Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) started a pilot project about inclusive education to assistance reeducate the children with slight disabilities via the education and this project was started with the collaboration of Special Education Department in seven district of Punjab province (The News, 2015). But no substantial benefits could be obtained from this project and not was continued for further more.

The Government of Punjab launched a pilot project with the name of (Punjab Inclusive Education Project) in two districts Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh with a price of Rs. 188.235 million during the

financial year 2015-2016. The key features of this scheme include identification of potential children, screening and location in schools, observing and retention of enrolled children, teacher training, improving school infrastructure, and provision of assistive devices and strength of special education centers at Tehsil level (Thakur and Abbas, 2017). As per UNICEF (2003), that inclusive education is thinkable in Pakistan, if the suitable resources support and funds are provided (see Caceres et al., 2010).

For better picture of inclusion, tutoring should come across the assortment of the needs of the students as well as pedagogy should be such impeccable that least restrict the environment for one or more students. There should be a consultation among all the stakeholders of the institutions so that accessibility can be raised. To maintain the educational criterions, procedure of assessment should be multi archetypal as well as flexible. To see the desires of varied cluster of students, more comprehensive and universal approaches should be adopted by the institutions (Lawrie et al., 2017)

Statement of the problem

Inclusive education is very important for the quality education of all learners. Therefore it is highly desired to get familiar with the actual situation for implementing inclusive program in the province Punjab. This research was conducted to know the appraisal of current situation of southern Punjab about inclusive education from the teachers who are teaching in district Bahawalnagar, Muzaffargarh and district Bahawalpur.

Research Questions

1. What is the current situation of inclusive education in southern Punjab?
2. Is there any significant difference between the opinions of teachers based on their gender?
3. What is the difference among the opinion of teachers on the basis of their job experiences?
4. Is there any significant difference among the opinion of teachers based on their qualification?
5. What is the significant difference among the opinion of teachers based on their districts (locality)?

Research Design and Methodology

Quantitative paradigm was used to conduct this research. From different types of research designs of quantitative paradigm, descriptive research design was used to demeanor this research.

Population and Sample Strategy

Population of this research was teachers of southern Punjab who are working in the schools of general education. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of this study. Three districts were selected from southern Punjab. Those districts were Bahawalnagar, Muzaffargarh and Bahawalpur and 123 teachers of these three districts were taken as a sample of this research.

Data Collection Instrument

Indigenous scale was used to gather the data from the teachers of schools of general education from the district Bahawalnagar, Muzaffargarh and Bahawalpur. The first part of the scale was comprised on the consent, the second part of the scale was contained on demographic information of the respondents and the third part of the scale was contained the statements to calculate the current situation of southern Punjab to implement the inclusive education program.

Numerical rating scale was used against each statement of the third part of the scale. Before implementing the indigenous scale in actual field, that scale was validated from the field experts. After conquering the validity of the instrument, statements against numerical rating scale were confirmed. Total 29 statements were unequivocal to implement the scale in actual location. Reliability of that indigenous scale was also found out to know the credibility of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha=.958 was found out for this purpose.

Data Analysis Procedure

After the completion of the procedure of data collection, data was analyzed through SPSS. Parametric statistics were used to examine the results. The results were presented in tabulated form with interpretation.

Table 1

Frequency of Sample Size on the Basis of Gender, Experiences, Qualification and Districts

Demographics	Values	%	f
Gender of teachers	Male	42.3	52
	Female	57.7	71
Experience of Teachers	0-5	9.8	12
	6-10	30.1	37
	11-15	26	32
	16-20	7.3	9
	21-25	3.3	4
	26-30	23.6	29
Qualification of Teachers	B.A/ B.Ed.	8.9	11
	M.A/M.Ed.	69.9	86
	M.Phil.	21.1	26
Districts of Teachers	Bahawalnagar	67.5	83
	Bahawalpur	28.5	35
	Muzaffargarh	4.1	5

Table 1 shows that the total numbers of respondents were 123 from which 52 respondents were male teachers and 71 respondents were female teachers. Twelve teachers had the experience of 0-5 years, thirty-seven teachers had experience of 6-10 years, thirty-two teachers had the experience of 11-15 years, nine teachers had the experience of 16-20 years, four teachers had the experience of 21-25 years and twenty-nine teachers had the experience of 26-30 years. From these one hundred and twenty three respondents, the qualification of eleven teachers was B.A/B.Ed, eighty six teachers had the qualification of M.A/M.Ed whereas twenty six teachers were of M.Phil level. Eighty-three teachers were from district Bahawalnagar, thirty-five teachers were from district Bahawalpur and five teachers were from district Muzaffargarh.

Table 2
Frequencies of the questions on the basis of responses of the respondents

Sr. No	Statements	20%		40%		60%		80%		100%		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Educational programs have prepared the teachers to teach students in inclusive classroom.	12	9.8	16	13	35	28.5	29	23.6	31	25.2	3.41	1.26
2	Teachers have clear concept of inclusive education.	13	10.6	18	14.6	20	16.3	33	26.8	39	31.7	3.54	1.35

3	Sufficient teaching material is available to run inclusive education program appropriately.	20	16.3	25	20.3	24	19.5	26	21.1	28	22.8	3.14	1.40
4	Teachers have the ability to deal students in inclusive classroom.	8	6.5	14	11.4	30	24.4	36	29.3	35	28.5	3.62	1.19
5	There is a problem of time management while working in an inclusive setup.	14	11.4	17	13.8	28	22.8	38	30.9	26	21.1	3.37	1.27
6	Teachers have insufficient knowledge about inclusive education.	26	21.1	35	28.5	19	15.4	28	22.8	15	12.2	2.76	1.34
7	Attitude of teachers is positive towards inclusive education.	4	3.3	15	12.2	24	19.5	38	30.9	42	34.1	3.8	1.13
8	Parents are aware of inclusive education.	33	26.8	24	19.5	28	22.8	24	19.5	14	11.4	2.69	1.35
9	Parents of students with special needs are willing to admission of their children in inclusive setup.	15	12.2	16	13	31	25.2	36	29.3	25	20.3	3.33	1.27
10	Curriculum is non inclusive.	24	19.5	29	23.6	35	28.5	25	20.3	10	8.1	2.74	1.22
11	Educational plans are regular to fulfill the needs of students in inclusive setup.	12	9.8	24	19.5	37	30.1	30	24.4	20	16.3	3.18	1.21
12	Teachers are fully trained to deal the students with special needs in inclusive classroom.	17	13.8	17	13.8	22	17.9	34	27.6	33	26.8	3.40	1.38
13	Teachers are willing to attend the students with special needs in their classroom.	11	8.9	13	10.6	34	27.6	33	26.8	32	26	3.50	1.24
14	Teachers feel comfort in working in inclusive classroom.	8	6.5	17	13.8	30	24.4	38	30.9	30	24.4	3.53	1.19
15	Students with special needs could be treated equally in inclusive classroom.	9	7.3	9	7.3	27	22	36	29.3	42	34.1	3.76	1.21
16	Students with special needs could participate in classroom on equal	8	6.5	14	11.4	25	20.3	43	35	33	26.8	3.64	1.18

	basis.												
17	Follow up activities will plan to estimate the progress of students with special needs in inclusive education program.	11	8.9	15	12.2	34	27.6	34	27.6	29	23.6	3.45	1.2 3
18	Teachers will accept the students with special needs in inclusive classroom.	8	6.5	15	12.2	34	27.6	30	24.4	36	29.3	3.58	1.2 2
19	Parents of normal students will accept inclusive educational programs.	9	7.3	16	13	39	31.7	38	30.9	21	17.1	3.37	1.1 3
20	Structure of school building is supportive towards inclusive programs.	17	13.8	13	10.6	24	19.5	37	30.1	32	26	3.44	1.3 5
21	School environment is supportive to run inclusive educational program.	10	8.1	19	15.4	21	17.1	39	31.7	34	27.6	3.55	1.2 7
22	There is a zero rejection policy to enroll all types of students in inclusive education program.	15	12.2	14	11.4	25	20.3	31	25.2	38	30.9	3.51	1.3 5
23	School staff accepts inclusive education open heartedly.	10	8.1	12	9.8	28	22.8	40	32.5	33	26.8	3.60	1.2 1
24	Supportive services are available to facilitate the students in inclusive setup.	11	8.9	14	11.4	27	22	43	35	28	22.8	3.51	1.2 1
25	Students with special needs would be able to participate in extracurricular activities.	7	5.7	15	12.2	26	21.1	44	35.8	31	25.2	3.63	1.1 5
26	Students with special needs will have to face the problem of transportation while attending inclusive education program.	6	4.9	19	15.4	30	24.4	34	27.6	34	27.6	3.58	1.1 8
27	Large class size is a hurdle to run inclusive education program effectively.	10	8.1	13	10.6	30	24.4	35	28.5	35	28.5	3.59	1.2 3

28	Schools are accessible for the students with special needs to gain inclusive education.	7	5.7	21	17.1	40	32.5	30	24.4	25	20.3	3.37	1.15
29	Funds are enough to provide resources in inclusive education program.	24	19.5	25	20.3	26	21.1	22	17.9	26	21.1	3.01	1.42

Table 2 shows that the maximum ratio of the teachers (28.5%) rated 60% against the statement that educational programs have prepared the teachers to teach students in inclusive classroom. Maximum (31.7%) of respondents' rate 100% against the statement that teachers have clear concept of inclusive education. Sufficient teaching material is available to run inclusive education program appropriately has achieved 100% rating from the majority (22.8%) of the teachers. Majority (29.3%) of the respondents rated 80% that teachers have the ability to deal students in inclusive classroom. Majority (30.9%) of the respondents' rate 80% that there is a problem of time management while working in an inclusive setup. Maximum (28.5%) numbers of the teachers were less agreed just 40% that teachers have insufficient knowledge about inclusive education. And the (34%) teachers gave 100% rate towards the statement that attitude of teachers is positive towards inclusive education. Most of the teachers (22.8%) reported that only 20% parents are aware of inclusive education. Maximum (29.3%) respondents replied in favor of 80% that parents of students with special needs are willing to admission of their children in inclusive setup from majority of the respondents. This table also indicates that majority (28.5%) of the teachers' rate 60% that curriculum is non inclusive. Most of the teachers (30.1%) rate 60% that educational plans are regular to fulfill the needs of students in inclusive setup. And 80% rating has achieved by (27.6%) respondents that teachers are fully trained to deal the students with special needs in inclusive classroom from majority of the teachers. Most of the teachers (27.6%) rate 60% that teachers are willing to attend the students with special needs in their classroom. Teachers (30.9%) feel comfort in working in inclusive classroom has gain 80% rating from majority of the respondents. Majority (34.1%) of the teachers 100% agreed that students with special needs could be treated equally in inclusive classroom. Students with special needs could participate in classroom on equal basis has gain 80% rating from majority (35%) of the teachers. As per this table (27.6%) of the respondents' rate 60% as well as same (27.6%) rate 80% that follow up activities will plan to estimate the progress of students with special needs in inclusive education program. Most (29.3%) of the teachers gave 100% rate that teachers will accept the students with special needs in inclusive classroom. Parents of normal students will accept inclusive educational programs have obtained 60% from majority (31.7%) of the respondents. And 80% rate was given by the majority (26%) of the respondents that structure of school building is supportive towards inclusive programs. Most (31.7%) of the teachers gave 80% rate that school environment is supportive to run inclusive educational program. And 100% rating was given by the (30.9%) respondents that there is a zero rejection policy to enroll all types of students in inclusive education program. Most (32.5%) of the respondents gave 80% rating that school staff accept inclusive education open heartedly. Supportive services are available to facilitate the students in inclusive setup has achieved 80% rating of most (35%) of the teachers. Most (35.8%) of the teachers' rate 80% that students with special needs would be able to contribute in extracurricular activities. Students with special needs will have to face the problem of transportation while attending inclusive education program has achieved 80% & 100% rate from majority (27.6%) of the respondents. Majority (28.5%) of the respondents gave 80% & same (28.5%) gave 100% rating that large class size is a hurdle to run inclusive education program effectively. According to the opinion of most (32.5%) of the teachers 60% schools are accessible for the students with special needs to gain inclusive education. Most (21.1%) of the teachers' rate 60% & same (21.1%) rate 100% that funds are enough to provide resources in inclusive education program.

Table 3
Group Statistics on Gender Base

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig (2-tailed)</i>
Male	52	99.67	23.81	-.414	121	.680
Female	71	97.80	25.44			

Independent samples t-test table depicts that mean score of male teachers is high as compared to the mean score of female teachers (mean male: 99.67, mean female: 97.80). Standard deviation of male teachers is less as compared to the female teachers (SD male: 23.81, SD female: 25.44). This table indicates that there is no any statistically significant difference between the responses (male and female teachers) so, there is no any statistically significant was noted as per t-test between male and female teachers ($t = -.414$, $df = 121$, $Sig = .680$).

Table 4
One Way ANOVA on Districts Base

	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Between Groups	2329.24	4.01	.021
Within Groups	580.84		

Table 4 shows that while comparing the responses of teachers on the basis of district level, there is a statistically significant difference among the respondents on the basis of districts ($F = 4.01$, $Sig = .021$).

Table 5
LSD Post Hoc Test on the Basis of Districts

(I) Districts of Teachers	(J) Districts of Teachers	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Bahawalpur	Bahawalnagar	13.303	.007
Bahawalpur	Muzaffargarh	1.428	.902
Muzaffargarh	Bahawalnagar	11.874	.287

Table 5 exposes that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the teachers of district Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar ($MD = 13.303$, $Sig = .007$), there is no any statistically significant difference between the mean score of the responses of teachers of district Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh ($MD = 1.428$, $Sig = .902$), there is no any statistically significant difference between the mean score of the responses of teachers of district Muzaffargarh and Bahawalnagar ($MD = 11.874$, $Sig = .287$).

Table 6
One Way ANOVA on the Basis of Qualification of the Teachers

	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Between Groups	3176.683	5.605	.005
Within Groups	566.719		

Table 6 shows that while comparing the responses of teachers on the basis of their qualification, there is a statistically significant difference among the respondents ($f = 5.605$, $Sig = .005$).

Table 7
LSD Post Hoc Test on the Basis of Teachers' Qualification

(I) Qualification	(J) Qualification	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
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B.A/B.Ed	M.A/M.Ed	10.584	.168
B.A/B.Ed	M.Phil	25.402	.004
M.A/M.Ed	M.Phil	14.817	.006

Table 7 exposes that there is no any statistically significant difference between the mean score of the teachers having the qualification of B.A/B.Ed and having the qualification of M.A/M.Ed (MD=10.584, Sig=.168), there is statistically significant difference between the mean score of the responses of teachers having the qualification of B.A/B.Ed and having the qualification of M.Phil (MD=25.402, Sig=.004), there is statistically significant difference between the mean score of the responses of teachers having the qualification of M.A/M.Ed and having the qualification of M.Phil (MD=14.817, Sig=.006).

Table 8

One Way ANOVA on Job Experience of the Respondents

	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Between Groups	268.188	.430	.827
Within Groups	624.092		

Table 8 indicates that while comparing the responses of teachers on the basis of their experiences, there is no any statistically significant difference among the respondents ($f=.430$, Sig=.827).

Conclusions

In eye view of above findings, it is concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed that teachers have clear concept about inclusive education and their attitude positive towards inclusive education. It is identified that curriculum is non inclusive as well as educational plans are regular to fulfill the needs of students in this setup. Time management is a problem during working in inclusive set up but they feel comfort in working in inclusive classrooms. Students with special needs could be treated equally in inclusive classroom and they could be participated in classroom on equal basis. Parents of normal students will accept inclusive educational programs and school environment is supportive to run inclusive educational program. It is also indicated that it is a zero rejection policy to enroll all types of students in inclusive education and school staff accept inclusive education open heartedly. Supportive services are available to facilitate the students in inclusive setup and they would be able to participate in extracurricular activities. Schools are accessible for the students with special needs to gain inclusive education. All respondents (Male & Female) responses in same way no statistically significance difference was noted. On district level the responses of the respondents are changed and in somehow same way. Statistically significant difference was noted by the respondents regarding their qualification but in somehow no significance difference was noted in some degree levels. Different teachers of different level of teaching have such different experiences.

Discussion

The first objective of this was to find out the current situation of southern Punjab about inclusive education program. As per Thakur and Abbas (2017), The Government of Punjab started a pilot project with the name of (Punjab Inclusive Education Project) in two districts Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh with a price of Rs.188.235 million during the financial year 2015-2016. The key features of this project include identification of potential children, screening and placement in schools, monitoring and retention of enrolled children, teacher training, improving school infrastructure, and provision of assistive devices and strength of special education centers at Tehsil level. Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) launched a pilot project about inclusive education to assistance rehabilitate the children with slight disabilities by the education and this project was launched in seven district of Punjab province with the partnership of Special Education Department (The News, 2015). The second objective of this study was to discover the difference among the sentiments of the defendants about inclusive education. So, it is indorsed that Article 25A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan mandates that the Govt. shall provide

free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 and 16 years and shall make necessary arrangements for this purpose and there is no any condition for any students regarding discrimination on any reason. The Government shall, in prescribed manner, provide or cause to be provided adequate education to a child with disability or a special child.

Recommendations

1. Inclusive educational plans should be on regular bases not only for some times.
2. Inclusive educational plans should be designed and implemented on regular basis not on pilot project basis.
3. Targeted teachers training workshops on inclusive education should be organized, conducted and monitored with reference to implementation of inclusive education in southern schools of Punjab.
4. By taking the advantage of single national curriculum agenda, inclusive curriculum should be should be designed and implemented in the schools.
5. Follow up activities should be planned to estimate the progress of students with special needs in inclusive education program.
6. Inclusive assessment procedures should be adopted by the teachers for the encouragement of students with all needs in the evaluation system.
7. Different categories of accommodations should be incorporated by the teachers for the implantation of inclusive setup in regular schools.
8. Transportation facility should be provided to students with special needs while attending inclusive education program.
9. Large class size is a hurdle to run inclusive education program effectively so, therefore class size should be small or as per demand of special students.

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