

Awareness of Students Pursuing B. Ed. Programme in Assam on Inclusion in Education

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Abstract: The primary objective of this study was to assess the level of awareness among students pursuing B. Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate any differences in awareness between male and female students, as well as between pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers within the B.Ed. programme. A sample of 1,763 students was selected for the study, comprising 750 male students and 1,013 female students. Among these participants, 1,360 were pre-service teachers, while 403 were deputed teachers pursuing their B.Ed. degree in Assam. Data was gathered using the B.Ed. Students' Awareness on Inclusion in Education Scale developed by the researcher herself. The findings revealed that the overall level of awareness about inclusion in education among B.Ed. students in Assam is above average. Using the 't' -test as a statistical method, the result showed that there is no significant difference between the male and female students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam in their awareness of inclusion in education. However, a notable difference was observed in the level of awareness concerning inclusion in education between pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers.

Keywords: Awareness, B.Ed. Programme, Inclusion in Education.

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I. Introduction

Education systems have changed significantly over the past few decades, with an increasing focus on educating children with disabilities in mainstream schools. This approach, known as inclusion, emphasizes the importance of integrating students with diverse educational needs into regular educational settings rather than placing them in special schools. The 'Salamanca Statement,' adopted at the 'World Conference on Special Educational Needs: Access and Quality,' called on all governments to adopt, as a matter of law or policy, the principles of inclusive education. This means enrolling all children in regular schools unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise (UNESCO, 1994). These inclusive schools should recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students. They must accommodate different learning styles and ensure quality education for all by providing appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resources, and partnerships with their communities (UNESCO, 1994). Successful implementation of this policy largely depends on the perspectives of the personnel responsible for its execution, namely the teachers and their awareness on inclusive education. Awareness of teachers means the knowledge and perception of teachers on inclusive education. Teachers need to be aware of the capacity, potentialities, and problems of various needs of the children which are necessary or important for

acceptance in the regular school setup. The Guidelines for Inclusion (UNESCO, 2005) stated that "Teachers knowledge, attitude and tolerance are the vehicles for the construction of an inclusive and participatory society". The New Education Policy 2020 also pointed out that the awareness and knowledge of how to teach children with specific disabilities will be an integral part of all teacher education programmes along with gender sensitization and sensitization towards all underrepresented groups.

II. Literature Review:

Berwal (2008) conducted an experimental study on impact of an intervention programme (IE) on awareness level and attitude of high school students, teachers and administrators towards pupils with disabilities in inclusive setting. He found a low level of awareness among students and moderate level of awareness among teachers and administrators. Rajani (2014) conducted a study on implementation of inclusive education in primary and secondary schools of Visakhapatnam. It was found that majority of the teachers agreed to provide equal opportunities for the students admitted irrespective of their physical and mental status. In a study conducted by Kaul (2015), it was found that majority of teachers were not aware about the policies and legal provisions and majority of them had neutral attitude towards children with sensory and loco motor impairment education in inclusive school. Patil (2015) conducted a study to identify the children with special needs and

implementation of inclusive education in general primary schools. Teachers' attitude was also studied in the study. It was found that teachers' awareness and attitude was found to be favorable. There are various barriers in implementation of inclusive education like administrative officers for supervision, headmasters; regular teachers are facing various problems. Seb & Shastri (2018) found in their study that level of awareness and attitude of the teachers was low in the pre-test. However, with the introduction of the intervention programme in phase II it shows vast change in the response of the participants. Das (2021) in his study found that not all teachers of secondary school are aware of the term 'Inclusive Education'. It was also found that teachers are not aware that children with special education needs could also do better in education and score higher than normal children if they are provided with proper educational needs and means. Gulay & Altun (2023) conducted a study to examine the awareness of teacher candidates towards inclusive education. The results revealed that the awareness of teacher candidates' inclusive education was at a moderate level. Nayak & Mishra (2024), in their study revealed that most of prospective teachers are well versed about different aspects of inclusive education. It shows that very less number of prospective Teachers are averagely aware concerning to various aspects of inclusive education.

III. Rationale of the study

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009 emphasized the urgent need to prepare teachers to address their biases and develop professional competencies to tackle the challenges of inclusion. It pointed out that teachers must be sensitized to the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the various adjustments schools need to make regarding infrastructure, curriculum, teaching methods, and other practices to support children with diverse needs. In response to this need, inclusive education was integrated into the teacher education curriculum, as recommended by NCFTE 2009, to enhance awareness and improve attitudes towards inclusive practices among the students. B.Ed. students represent the future educators of the country, and it is essential that they acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices effectively. They must understand the concepts and policies associated with inclusive education to create supportive and equitable learning environments for all students, including those with disabilities and diverse needs. Recognizing the significance of B.Ed. students' understanding and perception of inclusive education, this research aims to examine their awareness regarding inclusion in education.

IV. Research questions

The study attempted to address the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of students pursuing B. Ed programme in Assam on inclusion in education?
2. Is there any difference between male and female students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding the awareness on inclusion in education?
3. Is there any difference between pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding the awareness on inclusion in education?

V. Objectives of the study

1. To study the level of awareness of students pursuing B.Ed. program in Assam on inclusion in education
2. To compare the awareness of male and female students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education.
3. To compare the awareness of pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers, pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education.

VI. Hypotheses of the study:

- I. There is no significant difference in the awareness of male and female students pursuing the B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education.
- II. There is no significant difference in the awareness of pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam concerning inclusion in education.

VII. Methodology

Method of the study:

Considering the nature of the study, descriptive survey method was used in the present study.

Population of the Study:

The population of the present study consists of 5,850 students enrolled in the two-year B.Ed. program across all Teacher Education Institutes in Assam.

Sample of the present study:

Out of 5,850 students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam, 1763 students were selected for this study. The sample included 750 male students, 1,013 female students. The sample also included 1,360 pre-service teachers, and 403 deputed teachers pursuing two years B.Ed. programme in Assam (Session 2024-2025)

Tool Used for data collection

To collect data, the researcher employed a self-developed tool named as "B.Ed. Students' Awareness on Inclusion in Education Scale." This scale comprises 45 multiple-choice items, organized into

four dimensions of inclusion in education. Respondents are required to mark the option that corresponds to their choice. The reliability of the scale was measured at 0.81.

Techniques Used:

In the present study, inferential statistics was used for the analysis of data.

VIII. Results and discussion

Objective 1: To study the level of awareness of students pursuing B. Ed programme in Assam on inclusion in education.

To analyze the level of awareness, the researcher administered the B.Ed. students' awareness on inclusion in education scale on 1763 students pursuing B.Ed. programme in different teacher education institutes of Assam and found the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis.

Table: 1

Level of awareness of students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam on inclusion in education

	N	Mean	Median	SD		Kurtosis
Awareness on inclusion in education	1763	28.13	28	4.82	-0.25	0.20

Table 1 shows the statistical measures regarding the awareness of students pursuing B.Ed. program in Assam on inclusion in education. The mean (M) is 28.13, the median (Mdn) is 28, the standard deviation (SD) is 4.82, the skewness is -0.25, and the kurtosis is 0.20. The negative skewness indicates that a greater proportion of students in the sampled group scored higher than the average score. Additionally, the kurtosis value of 0.20 suggests that the distribution of scores is leptokurtic, meaning it has a sharper peak than a normal distribution.

The findings of the present study contradict previous research conducted by Gaad and Khan (2007), Berwal (2008), and Seb & Shastri (2018), which reported that the level of awareness among teachers was low. Das (2021) noted that not all secondary school teachers are familiar with the term "inclusive education." Similarly, Chary and Perumal (2022) found that the awareness of B.Ed. student teachers regarding inclusive education is just below average. Moreover, Hodgkinson and Devarakonda (2009) found that inclusion is often not well understood by teachers.

In contrast, the findings of the current study are supported by earlier research conducted by Kaul (2015), Gulay and Altun (2023), and Nayak and Mishra (2024), which revealed that teacher awareness of inclusive education is average to above average. These studies indicate that teachers are becoming

more aware of and understand the concept of inclusive education.

Objective 2: To compare the awareness of male and female students pursuing B. Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education

Table 2, shows the comparison of awareness of male and female students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam on inclusion in education.

Table 2

Comparison of awareness of male and female students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam on inclusion in education

Category	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	df	t' Value
Male	750	27.48	4.91	0.25	1594	1.64
Female	1013	26.84	4.81			

Remarks: Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 presents a computed 't' value of 1.64, which is lower than the table value of 1.96 with 1,594 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the result is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the hypothesis stating that 'There is no significant difference in the awareness of male and female students pursuing the B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education' is accepted. This leads to the conclusion that there is no significant difference in awareness of male and female students pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education.

These findings contradict previous research conducted by Raju and Yashoda (2021) and Patowary (2023), which indicated that awareness of inclusive education differs significantly between male and female educators. Patowary (2023) found that male B.Ed. students exhibited a higher level of awareness toward inclusive education compared to their female counterparts.

However, this study's findings are supported by research conducted by Kaur (2016), Mishra (2018), Dave (2021), and Nayak & Mishra (2024), which reported no significant difference in awareness of inclusive education between male and female teachers.

Objective 3: To compare the awareness of pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers, pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam regarding inclusion in education.

In the present study, the researcher made an attempt to compare the awareness of pre-service student teacher and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam. Table 3, shows the comparison of awareness of pre-service student teacher and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam on inclusion in education.

Table 3

Comparison of awareness of pre-service student teacher and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam on inclusion in education

Category	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	df	't' Value
Pre-service student teacher	1360	26.73	4.82	0.18	645	1.99
Deputed teacher	403	26.99	4.92			

Remarks: Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows a computed 't' value of 1.99, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96 for a degree of freedom (df) of 645. This finding is considered significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the awareness of pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam concerning inclusion in education is rejected. Thus, we conclude that there is a significant difference in the awareness levels of pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers pursuing B.Ed. programme in Assam concerning inclusion in education.

Findings of the study

The major findings of this study are as follows:

1. The level of awareness regarding inclusion in education among students enrolled in the B.Ed. program in Assam is higher than the average level.
2. In comparing male and female students in the B.Ed. program, there is no significant difference in their awareness of inclusion in education. This indicates that both genders have similar levels of awareness regarding this topic.
3. The study also revealed a significant difference in awareness between pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers in the B.Ed. program concerning inclusion in education.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that the awareness level among students enrolled in the B.Ed. program in Assam regarding inclusion in education is higher than the average. Additionally, there is no significant difference in awareness between male and female B.Ed. students regarding inclusion in education. However, a significant difference was found in the level of awareness between pre-service student teachers and deputed teachers in the B.Ed. program in Assam concerning inclusion in education.

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