

A Study on the Awareness Level of Inclusive Education among Higher Secondary School Teachers in Itanagar and Naharlagun town

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Abstract

This study explores the awareness of inclusive education among higher secondary school teachers in Itanagar and Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh, within the context of the National Education Policy 2020. Inclusive education aims to integrate students with diverse abilities into mainstream classrooms, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all. Despite policy frameworks emphasizing this approach, practical implementation remains challenging, particularly in regions with unique socio-cultural and geographic contexts like Arunachal Pradesh. The research employed a descriptive survey method, using the “Teacher Awareness Survey about Inclusive Education” (STATIC) to assess teachers’ understanding and attitudes towards inclusive education. The sample consisted of 80 higher secondary school teachers selected through stratified random sampling. Key findings indicate a varied level of awareness among teachers: approximately 26.3% have low awareness, 48.8% have moderate awareness, and 25% exhibit high awareness. Gender-based analysis reveals a statistically significant difference, with male teachers demonstrating slightly higher awareness than female teachers. However, no significant differences were found based on subject background or years of experience. The study highlights a critical need for targeted professional development to enhance teachers’ understanding and implementation of inclusive education practices.

Key Words: *Inclusive Education, Awareness, Higher Secondary School, Teachers*

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Introduction

The concept of “inclusion” in education emphasizes integrating all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, into general education settings. Originating from the idea of inherent human dignity, inclusion focuses on creating school cultures that celebrate diversity and accommodate various needs. Corbett (2001) notes that true inclusion involves more than just placing students with special needs into regular classrooms; it requires a commitment to actively embrace and support differences within a welcoming environment.

The National Policy on Education (1986) and the Program of Action (1992) highlight the importance of integrating children with special needs into mainstream education to ensure they can grow and thrive alongside their peers. Inclusive education aims to provide equal opportunities for all children, utilizing flexible education systems that adapt to diverse learning needs.

Effective inclusion involves using strategies like peer instruction and cooperative learning, supported by appropriate resources and a zero-rejection philosophy. This approach ensures that no student is excluded based on disability and that all students receive quality education in their local schools.

In recent years, inclusive education has emerged as a transformative approach to educational reform, emphasizing the integration of students with diverse needs into mainstream classrooms. This philosophy aligns with global efforts to foster educational environments where every learner, regardless of their abilities or background, has access to quality education. In the context of India, inclusive education is not just a policy directive but a crucial step towards ensuring equity and diversity in the educational landscape. This is particularly significant in regions like Arunachal Pradesh, where the intersection of varied cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors creates a unique educational milieu.

Arunachal Pradesh, a northeastern state of India, is distinguished by its rich tapestry of indigenous communities and its challenging geographical terrain. The state’s educational system operates within this complex context, presenting both opportunities and obstacles for implementing inclusive education. The presence of diverse ethnic groups, coupled with infrastructural limitations, necessitates a tailored approach to inclusive education that considers local realities. Higher secondary school teachers in Arunachal Pradesh are pivotal in translating the principles of inclusive education into practice. Their awareness and understanding of inclusive education are critical to the successful implementation of policies aimed at integrating students with varying needs into the mainstream classroom. However, there is a significant gap in understanding how well-equipped these educators are to handle the diverse needs of their students, given the unique challenges they face.