

## **Measuring Pre-Service Teachers' Teaching Aptitude for Inclusive Education: Need of the Hour**

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### **Abstract**

Inclusive education is a recent concept in India. For making the inclusion as reality, India needs to prepare efficient teachers who can carry responsibility for making the inclusive education successful. Rehabilitation Council of India is taking All India Online Aptitude Test for admitting candidates in certificate and diploma level special education course. But, the general teacher education institutes are neither conducting a pre-entry level test nor they measure aptitude of the candidates before admitting them into the special B.Ed. course. By reviewing the aptitude tests constructed so far in India, it was observed that the tests were meant for measuring the general teaching aptitude and the researcher failed to find any research which focused on teaching aptitude for inclusive education. So constructing a test which measures pre-service teachers' aptitude for teaching in inclusive education will benefit not only to the inclusive school community but also to teacher education institutes, teacher educators, stakeholders and policy makers involved in inclusive education. In the lines of the above, the present paper focuses on the concept of inclusive education, concept of teaching aptitude and teaching aptitude for inclusive education.

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusive Education, Teaching Aptitude, Measurement, Pre-service Teachers

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### **INTRODUCTION**

People differ from one another physically as well as mentally and their performance also varies in activities such as leadership, music, art, mechanical work, teaching etc. some persons outperform others in acquiring knowledge or skills even in similar circumstances. The reason can be their natural and acquired capacity or ability. This naturally acquired ability can be further developed through appropriate training. Thus we can say that naturally acquired ability and appropriate training are required to be a successful person in teaching.

Teacher education is an essential component for implementation of Inclusive Education [IE] in the classroom (Booth et. al., 2003; Ainscow, 2005; and Sandhill & Singh, 2005). In India, prior to NCTE Guidelines (2014), the general teacher education courses were offering an optional paper on special education. The special education paper was neither an integral part of training nor equipping teachers to deal with the challenging diversity (Singhal, 2005a). Many surveys also reported that the teachers' attitude towards inclusion is not positive (Ellins & Porter, 2005) and they feel themselves as unprepared for

inclusion and for teaching learners with diverse needs (Forlin, 2001). Due to lack of proper training, the teachers will hesitate to join inclusive schools. Thus admitting candidates with aptitude towards teaching in IE can benefit to some extent to make the IE program successful. Looking to this, the present paper focuses on concept of IE, concept of teaching aptitude and need to measure aptitude for teaching in IE.

### **CONCEPT OF IE**

The concept of IE has emerged from the idea of providing equal opportunities to all children including Children with Special Needs [CwSN]. The World Declaration of Education For All [EFA] (1990) emphasized on special attention to learning needs of CwSN. On the line of Salamanca statement, India has framed legislative act Persons with Disability [PwD] Act (1995) and Right To Education [RTE] Act (2009) for ensuring free education of CwSN in an appropriate environment till the age of 18 years.

In IE, all children are welcomed, accepted and supported for their learning needs. The emphasis is not on treating their deficiencies but to adapt the environment for accommodating all children and providing equal opportunity to learn irrespective of their diverse learning needs. The IE is a flexible system of education. It is the individualized support system provided in the general schools committed to an appropriate EFA (Hammekan, 2008).

The concept of IE is now accepted as an efficient means of realizing the dream of EFA. It is primarily about belonging membership and acceptance of all children including CwSN. It is not just based on students' placement but creating an environment that supports and includes all learners.

### **CONCEPT OF TEACHING APTITUDE**

Human working efficiency is not easily measured as it varies with a number of factors such as aptitude for task involved, adequacy of training for the task, motivation and condition of work etc. Aptitude is a quality in an individual which is indicative of the probable extent to which a person will tend to acquire under suitable training.

If a person has an aptitude for teaching that means s/he has capacity to acquire proficiency in teaching under appropriate conditions and s/he will succeed in teaching. Many factors are involved with teaching aptitude like knowledge, communication skills, academic achievement and personality traits (Kaur, 2007).

Teaching aptitude test is directly concerned with teacher training programmes and it can prove very useful in the selection of teacher trainees. The author has reviewed the available teaching aptitude tests constructed in India by referring National Psychological Corporation Catalogue (2014) and Rupa Psychological Centre Catalogue (2016-17) and thereby from internet. The tests were:

1. Teaching Aptitude Test Battery (English) by M. M. Shah (1962)
2. Teaching Aptitude Test (Hindi) by K. P. Pandey (1968)
3. Teaching Aptitude Test (Hindi) by S. N. Sharma (1969)
4. Teaching Aptitude Test (English) by S. C. Gakhar&Rajnish (1971)

5. Teaching Aptitude Test (Hindi) by Jai Prakash & R. P. Srivastava (1973)
6. Teaching Aptitude Test (Hindi) by B. M. Upadhyay (1976)
7. Teaching Aptitude Test Battery (Hindi) by Shamim Karim & A. K. Dixit (1986)
8. Teaching Aptitude Scale (English) by Sanjay Vohra (1993)
9. Teaching Aptitude Test Battery (Hindi & English) by R. P. Singh & S. N. Sharma (1998)
10. Teaching Aptitude Test (English) by S. S. Dahiya & L. C. Singh (2004)

From the review of these tests, it was observed that all the tests were constructed for measuring general teaching aptitude and no any researcher attempted to construct teaching aptitude test for IE. Thus there is need to construct a test that measure teachers' aptitude for teaching in IE as it will benefit to select and train teachers for IE.

### **TEACHING APTITUDE FOR IE**

IE has been started to break the isolation between special and general education, to bridge the gap between them and to mainstream CwSN into general education to learn with their peers. But despite policies and provisions, IE has not achieved desired success due to lack of supporting system (Shevde, 1997), lack of awareness about policies and provisions among general educators (Zaveri, 2001), negative attitude towards CwSN (Philips, 2007) and inattention of teachers towards CwSN in classroom (Nayak, 2008). These may be the reason for exclusive system of education and unreachable goal of EFA.

The lead role for successful implementation of IE would be of teachers as their role is very crucial. But the teacher training courses available nationwide provides limited training to teacher trainees (Singhal, 2005b). Without proper training the teachers feel themselves as unprepared for inclusion (Forlin, 2001) and in turn they will hesitate to join inclusive schools.

Indian school system is considered as one of the largest system in the world but 9,90,000 CwSN of the age group of 6-14 years are still out of the school (Census, 2011). Thus focus should be on teachers training in IE because without adequate training the teachers may be resistant to the idea of including CwSN in their classrooms (Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009). The prevalent teacher training programmes tend to overemphasize knowledge acquisition and pay limited attention to practical skills for teaching students with diverse learning needs which results into lack of confidence and negative attitude towards IE (Carroll, Forlin & Jobling, 2003). So the pre-service teachers feel themselves untrained for IE and after their training will hesitate to join inclusive schools. This could be the main reason for the shortage of trained teachers for IE. Thus, candidates with aptitude for teaching in IE should be spotted out through proper testing and advised to join teaching profession. This in turn will help to prepare efficient teacher for IE.

When we say a person possesses an aptitude for teaching in IE, it is assumed that s/he has a good proportion of the traits required for becoming successful teacher in IE. A number of traits required for being successful teacher in IE, compose as a whole the aptitude for teaching in IE.

## CONCLUSION

The Inclusive Education Teaching Aptitude Test [IETAT] will not benefit only to general teacher education institutes but also to special teacher education programmes. The test can be used either individually or in group. Even the inclusive schools where the school authorities need to recruit untrained teachers due to unavailability of trained teachers. IETAT can also be useful for them to recruit the teachers with aptitude for teaching in IE. As the pre-service teachers will carry the responsibility for the implementation of the IE policy, an understanding about their aptitude for teaching in IE can be useful for the teacher educators, stack holders and policy makers involved in the IE.

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