Is Optimism A Key Factor For Role Performance of Teachers Working with Special Students?

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Abstract

Even though each individual is different in some way from every other individual, the majority of students share certain common characteristics. Students who are mentally impaired, learning disabled, visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically challenged, and gifted are often identified as special learners. Early identification of a child with special needs is an important part of a special education teacher’s job, because early intervention is essential in educating children with disabilities. Special education teachers must know not only the child’s physical and mental possibilities and limitations but also the desires and interests pertaining to his/her present and future undertakings.

The educational development of the child largely depends on teacher’s capabilities to perform various roles within the classroom and outside the classroom to make the student competent in personal and social life. In the special education context, the teacher has to play the four major roles which are Institutional role, Organizational role, Societal role and Professional role. An important factor which can determine role performance of special education teacher is optimism. Optimism of teacher is a positive attitude which can bring the excellence in their performance. This can help keep negativity out of the classroom and benefit the teacher and the students. So it is possible that optimism of the teacher will help keep the students morale up throughout the school. In this context the study started with the question, is there any difference in role performance of teachers working with special students in reference to optimism? In the present study sample of 342 teachers working with special students were selected from those schools of Uttar Pradesh, which were concerned with mentally retarded, visually handicapped, deaf & dumb and orthopedically handicapped. So in the light of the objectives of the study and the availability of teachers, sample selected through purposive sampling.

Role performance Scale prepared by the researcher and Learned optimism scale (LOS) developed by Sanjyot Pethe were used as tools in this study. F-test was used to examine whether the difference found in mean scores is significant or not. Then, significant differences in role performance is found between the teachers working with special students having average and low optimism and the teachers having high and low optimism at 0.01 level of significance. But, no significant difference in role performance is found between the teachers having high and average optimism.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A teacher is a person who provides education for pupils. The role of teacher is often carried out at a school, formal and ongoing or other place of formal education. It is away
from argument that teacher is a backbone of the society, country and the educational system. Educational equality is not merely providing education in the same class with normal children, with the same instruction. It demands attention to be individual differences, needs and the provision of special services to meet those demands. Different professionals are involved in providing special educational services to the special children. Every special child has fundamentals, motives and drives common to children in general, but along with those common traits, there is in each case an exceptional condition that requires a special service in his/her educational programme. In the education setting the term Special Needs comes into play whenever a child's education program is officially altered from what would normally be provided to students through an Individual Education Plan which is sometimes referred to as an Individual Programme plan. That programme should be designed with full recognition of his/her likeness to normal children and his/her special needs. This in brief, constitutes the modern approach to the education of exceptional children.

The Sargent Report suggested children with disabilities should be entirely mainstreamed rather than debating the validity of inclusion. The Kothari Commission (1964–66), the first education commission of independent India, observed that the education of the disabled children should be an inseparable part of the education system. The commission suggested experimentation with integrated programmes in order to bring as many children as possible into these programmes. The Person with Disability Act strives to address all major aspects of the education sector that pertains to students with disabilities. It explained that children with disabilities have the right to access education in a “free and appropriate environment”. The most recent National Policy for People with Disabilities utilizes SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (Education for All), also created by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, as their main mode of implementation of the policy. By seeing the historical background of special education it is clear that for maintaining the status of special education it is necessary to prepare efficient and qualified special teachers.

There is a prevalent opinion that, to become teachers of special children they should specialize in some area of the education of exceptional children. At present, Graduate degree with B.Ed. (special education) or B.Ed. (general) with one year diploma in special education is the minimum qualification for a secondary level special Teacher. The special teachers have to pay attention for all the sciences to use the new results to make more effective the therapy and the care of the handicapped pupils. We call this “a paradigm changing” during science development. This is all part of the duty of special teacher that is the reason why they are different from the teachers of normal education. Special education teacher has to work in all the developmental dimension of school. Such multiple roles performed by the special education teachers demand certain specific knowledge, skills and right type of attitude to deal with different situations. So teacher can perform his/her roles effectively by willing participation in all the roles such as institutional, organizational, societal and professional. There are some factors which can influence the Role Performance of teachers working with special students viz. Demographic factors; Personality factors; Organizational factors etc.
Role Performance of teachers working with special students is determined by so many factors in which Optimism is important because optimism of teacher is a positive attitude which can bring excellence in their performance. It can play major role in determining the Role Performance of teachers working with special students.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of related literature enables the researcher to define the limits of his fields. It helps the researcher to delimit and define his problem. The knowledge of related literature, brings the researcher up-to-date on the work which others have done and thus to state the objectives clearly and concisely.

*Renuka, J. & Sapna, T. (2010)* explored the differences between Optimist and Pessimist adolescents on Emotional Maturity, Coping Strategies and Depression. The data was collected on 144 (86 optimists and 58 pessimist) adolescents. Sample was selected from K.V. Schools of Dehradun by using quota random sampling technique. The result showed a significant difference between Optimists and Pessimists on Emotional Maturity and its dimensions. Optimists were found to possess a tendency of using Playful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal more as compared to Pessimists when in a stressful situation. *Agashe, C. D. & Vivek, M. (2011)* investigated effect of ageing on changes in extraversion-introversion qualities among urban male Indian population. Result showed that with advancing age, Optimism towards life do change but not conclusively as the trends do not suggest any positive or negative direction. *Mary, M. H. & Donald, J. W. (1998)* tested hypotheses on principals’ Optimism, teacher perceptions and school effectiveness of that Optimism. Teacher perceptions of their principal’s Optimism and of their school’s effectiveness were found correlated. Results revealed that academic Optimism is comprised of teachers’ sense of efficacy and their emphasis on academics. Teacher’s factors are not related to teachers’ sense of academic Optimism. Academic Optimism is positively related to students’ socio-economic status but teacher experience and expertise factors are not related to teachers’ sense of academic Optimism. Exploratory analyses demonstrated that positive teacher beliefs are related to teachers’ commitment to the profession. *Woolfolk, A.H. & Wayne, K. H. (2008)* determined whether the construct of academic Optimism could be defined and measured as an individual teacher characteristic as it has been at the collective school level and second to identify sets of teacher beliefs and practices that were good predictors of academic Optimism. The result revealed that dispositional Optimism, humanistic classroom management, student beliefs, practices and organizational citizenship behaviour were individually and collectively related to the explanation of a teacher’s sense of academic Optimism and controlling for Socio-economic-Status. *Altay, E. (2011)* examined the mediating role of prospective teachers’ academic Optimism in the relationship between their future time perspective and professional plans about teaching. 396 prospective teachers voluntarily participated in the study. Regression Correlation, and structural equation modeling analyses were conducted in order to examine the mediating role of academic Optimism. Results revealed the relationships between future time perspective, planned effort, planned persistence and professional development aspirations were significantly and fully mediated by academic Optimism; whereas the relationship between future time perspective and leadership aspirations was not.
In this context question arises automatically- Is there any difference in Role performance of teachers working with special students in reference to Optimism? This study aims to answer this question.

**OBJECTIVE**

The Main objective of the study is to assess the role performance of teachers working with special students having high, average and low optimism.

**HYPOTHESIS**

There is no significant difference in role performance of teachers working with special students having high, average and low optimism.

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE VARIABLES USED**

**Special students**

In the present study only negative problems of special students were taken. So in the study, students who are mentally retarded, visually handicapped, deaf & dumb or orthopedically handicapped were considered as Special students.

**Special education teacher**

According to Bella Weaver, Special teachers are those who work with the students having wide range of disabilities. These include cognitive disabilities as well as physical or emotional ones. In the present study special teachers are those who are working with mentally retarded, visually handicapped, deaf & dumb and orthopedically handicapped students.

**Role Performance**

According to Dictionary of Education, Role Performance is the actual behaviour of people in a particular Role, in contrast to how they are supposed to behave. It is the inclusion of functions performed by teacher in a particular situation. For the purpose of this study the Role Performance of teachers working with special students was defined on the basis of four major roles such as- Instruction, Organizational, Societal and Professional roles.

**Optimism**

According to Victoria Ocampo, Optimism is a tendency to expect the best possible outcome or dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation. In the present study Optimism is defined on the basis of three factors. These factors are- enthusiasm, Confidence & Control.

**SAMPLE**

In the present study, firstly a list of all special schools situated in all four districts of Agra division dealing with mentally retarded students, visually handicapped students, deaf & dumb students and orthopedically handicapped students was prepared. In Agra division there are four districts (Mainpuri, Mathura, Firozabad, and Agra). Purposively all the teachers working in selected schools from these districts were included in the sample. A sample of 342 teachers working with special students (Males-163, Females-179) was
selected. In which there were 80 teachers who were dealing with mentally retarded students, 87 were concerning with visually handicapped students, 91 were dealing with deaf & dumb students and 84 were concerned with orthopedically handicapped students. Finally, the total available number of teachers was 342.

TOOLS USED
Role performance Scale was prepared by the researcher. The scale consists of 60 statements and has no time limit. An average subject requires approximately 20-25 minutes in completing the scale. The scale is based on four kinds of roles which are-

- **Instructional roles**- Recognize students’ individual abilities, Planning, preparing and delivering lesson to a variety of pupils, Prepare material for classroom activity, Use innovative instructional strategies, Teach basic skills to students to improve the area of weakness, Giving positive reinforcement, Monitor and evaluate the progress of students.

- **Organizational roles**- Design appropriate curriculum framework, Prepare individual education thereby plan according to the need of student, Maintain accurate record, Monitor ongoing programmes, Provide guidance and counseling.

- **Societal roles**- Teach socially accepted behavior to the students, Facilitate positive social relationships among children, Follow up activities organizing community projects, Contact with experts and parents, Conduct disability awareness activities in society, Monitoring the progress of community based projects and plans, Conduct the survey for diagnosis of children with disability.

- **Professional roles**- Attend Seminar and Conference, Research and Innovations, Publication in the field of Special Education.

Optimism scale developed by Sanjyot Pethe. The test consists of 22 statements and has no time limit for filling it. An average subject requires approximately 20-25 minutes completing the test. The dimensions of the test were Enthusiasm, Control and Confidence.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
The data analysis and interpretation is discussed in this section as per the framed hypothesis:

**There is no significant difference Role performance of teachers working with special students having high, average and low optimism.**

Table 1 shows the mean scores, standard deviations, degrees of freedom, calculated F-value of role performance of teacher working with special students having high, average and low optimism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>F-Value of Role performance of teachers working with special students having high, average and low optimism.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.P Opt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen in table 1 that the mean score of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high Optimism is higher than the teacher working with special students having average and low Optimism. The significance of difference between the means is tested by F-test. The perusal of the above table clearly shows that there is a significant difference at 0.01 level of significance in Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high, average and low Optimism. This indicates that the three groups (High, Average, and Low) are significantly different from each other in reference to Optimism. Therefore, the hypothesis ‘There is no significant difference in Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high, average and low Optimism’ is rejected at 0.01 level of significance.

So, the t-values are calculated to locate where the three groups actually differ. The analysis and interpretation is given as follows:

**a) Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high and average Optimism.**

Table-2 shows the mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high and average Optimism, standard deviations, degree of freedom, calculated t-value and table value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.P Opt</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Scores of Role Performance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Table Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>225.32</td>
<td>46.5237</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>222.44</td>
<td>51.0956</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance**

Table shows that the mean score of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high Optimism is higher than the other category of teachers. The significance of difference between the two means is tested by t-test. The obtained ‘t’ ratio is 0.450 which is less than 1.97, hence not significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the difference between the mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high and average Optimism is not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

**b) Role Performance of teachers working with special students having average and low Optimism.**

Table-3 shows the mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having average and low Optimism, standard deviations, degree of freedom, calculated t-value and table value.
Table 3: Role Performance of Teachers working with special students having Average and low Optimism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.P Opt</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Scores of Role Performance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Table Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>222.44</td>
<td>51.0956</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>11.722*</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>148.06</td>
<td>40.4554</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at 0.01 level of significance

The Table-3 shows that the mean score of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having average Optimism is higher than the other category of teachers. The significance of difference between the two means is tested by t-test. The obtained ‘t’ ratio is 11.722 which is much higher than 2.60, hence significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the difference between the mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having average and low Optimism is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

c) Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high and low Optimism.

Table-4 shows the mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high and low Optimism, standard deviations, degree of freedom, calculated t-value and table value.

Table 4: Role Performance of Teachers working with special students having high and low Optimism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.P Opt</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Scores of Role Performance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Table Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>225.32</td>
<td>46.5237</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>11.906**</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>148.06</td>
<td>40.4554</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at 0.01 level of significance

Table-4 shows that the mean score of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high Optimism is higher than the other category of teachers. The significance of difference between the two means is tested by t-test. The obtained ‘t’ ratio is 11.906 which is much higher than 2.60, hence significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the difference between the mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high and low Optimism is significant at 0.01 level of significance.
CONCLUSION
On the basis of various sources and available data, the graph represents mean scores of Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high average and low Optimism.

Fig 1: Role Performance of teachers working with special students in reference to High, Average and Low Optimism

![Graph showing mean scores of Role Performance for different levels of Optimism]

It can be said that the Role Performance of teachers working with special students having high Optimism is higher than the other two categories of teachers. F-test is used to examine that the difference found in mean scores is significant or not. Then, significant differences in Role Performance are found between the teachers having average & low Optimism and between the teachers having high & low Optimism at 0.01 level of significance. But, no significant difference in Role Performance is found between the teachers having high and average Optimism at 0.05 level of significance.

The above results may be due to the reason that Optimism includes Enthusiasm, Confidence and Control. Enthusiasm is a great excitement or interest in a subject. Confidence is dependence on one’s own abilities. Control is sense or command over the situation. So Optimism is the ability to evaluate positively. The teachers working with special students who have high Optimism should have all these qualities. If all these qualities are present in them, then it may quite sure that their Role Performance must go higher than others. Role Performance includes four roles- Instructional roles, organizational roles, societal roles and Professional roles. If a teacher working with special students has high Optimism, then he/she can organize teaching-learning process effectively, plan strategies relevant to teaching, attend Seminar and Conferences, Involve in Research and Innovation with enthusiasm and a positive attitude. As the Optimism of teachers working with special students decreases, the Role Performance also decreases. That is why the two groups (Average and Low, High and Low) are significantly different from each other in reference to Optimism.

REFERENCES


