

Yogarane Sakthivel
GICICTEL1804217

Views of Prospective Teachers on Teaching Differently abled Students placed in
Regular Classrooms

Ms. Yogarane Sakthivel
Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education,
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Abstract

As a teacher preparatory institution, the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo offers Bachelor of Education Honours degree program with the intention to produce general education teachers equipped with required knowledge, skills and relevant attitudes to be able to teach in schools. The curricular contents of this program are designed in a manner to attain this goal by giving special reference to teaching differently abled students placed alongside abled peers in regular classrooms. There were success stories in practicing inclusion by these regular teachers in Sri Lankan government schools. However, in recent times, inclusive practices have become a challenge to these teachers due to substantial increase in number of special needs students in the mainstream. It has been reported that the pre-service teachers often feel teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion setting is a far greater task than initially anticipated. This resulted in unfavorable beliefs about inclusive education. Hence, this study sought to explore the views of prospective teachers on teaching differently abled students in regular classes. Responses of 50 students selected from both the first and the final year were descriptively analyzed by mixed approach. Key findings revealed that the views of first year students seemed more likely to be favorable toward inclusive environment than that of final year students who had ten weeks of lived experiences in teaching. The implications are that the first year students may be more receptive to integrating differently abled students in the general education setting than the final-year students whose views might have been changed after the real teaching experience that they have gained by practicum. Further, the implications for the preparedness of the pre-service teachers were also considered.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, general education teachers, Bachelor of Education, pre-service and regular classrooms.