

Universal Design of learning (UDL) is a means for Challenging the Exclusion

¹Ms. Shobha N Odunavar & ²Mr. P. Kamaraj

Abstract: *Universal Design of Learning (UDL) is evolving method of teaching followed in the Inclusive Education system, drawing attention of researcher and educationist in the field of education including education of children with special needs too. SSA focuses on Education for All irrespective of the abilities, disabilities, caste, gender, socio-economic level; every child has to get education under one roof. As a supportive approach for the existing education system is Universal Design of Learning which plays very effective role. However, execution of the UDL approach at classroom level in Indian education system is insignificant. Hence, to identify the status of implementation of UDL at school level. The present study titled “Universal Design of learning (UDL) is a means for Challenging the Exclusion” has been conducted. Objectives of the Study are to identify the theoretical knowledge of the General Educators about Universal design of Learning, and to identify the practical knowledge of the General Educators about Universal Design of Learning. The Mixed method-Convergent parallel design was used with Random Sampling Technique to gather the data from 17 participants. For quantitative data statistical analysis, to qualitative data tabulating, coding and decoding was carried out. It was found that general educators have insignificant theoretical as well as practical knowledge about the Universal Design of Learning.*

Keywords: *Universal Design of Learning, General Educators,*

INTRODUCTION

Universal Design of Learning (UDL) is evolving method of teaching followed in the Inclusive Education system, drawing attention of researcher and educationist in the field of education including education of children with special needs too. UDL is bridging the gap between the learner's abilities and individual differences by involving various ways of imparting a particular knowledge to the diverse needs of the population of the particular classroom. According to Burgstahler (2011), learner diversity also comprises physical, visual, hearing, sensory, attention, and communication impairments. From a human rights perspective, however, such limitations should not deprive people from equal opportunities in education. The recent legislative development in the judiciary system of Indian Government the Right of persons with Disabilities (2016) is emphasized on “Universal Design” to meet the needs of the persons with disabilities in all walks of life. According to Rose, Harbour, Johnston, Daley & Abarbanell (2006), UDL attempts to tackle the limitations of a learning environment rather than addressing learner limitations. Al-Azawei, A, Serenelli, F, and Lundqvist, K (2016) identified that UDL researchers suggest that designing ‘accessible’ content and delivering it in an ‘accessible’ learning environment can improve learning experience regardless of individual learning abilities. Although UDL assumes that learning is a unique process, it focuses on curricula design techniques to minimize the implications of learner differences (Courey, Tappe, Siker, & LePage, 2012).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- McGhie-Richmond & Sung (2012): Investigating how candidate teachers can understand and apply the principles of UDL in their lesson plan ; Quantitative results showed that participants made substantial changes, but no significant differences. However, they benefited from the framework as indicated by the qualitative results.
- Al-Azawei et, al (2016) expressed that, the researches shows that there are many opportunities and challenges in order to universally validate this UDL framework. Further they expressed, most of the UDL literature presented its theoretical base and importance in the educational practice, whereas only a few studies included empirical investigations.
- Anstead, J.E.M (2016) prove that social change by identifying teachers’ perceptions of their own knowledge, needs and barriers to implementation of UDL in order assist administrators in effectively preparing them for delivery of instructional services to enhance learning for all diverse and struggling students.

RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

Since India's Independency several attempts were made to addresses the diverse needs of learners in mainstream school as well as in segregated setup right from the policy level to the classroom level. Several methods, techniques, approaches have been evolved and also effectively following in the classroom for the success of teaching-learning process. The present education system in India is the Child Centered Education, gives the importance of right of the children concern to education, and focuses on over all development of the children. At the same time schools follows the “Zero rejection policy” under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000). SSA focuses on Education for All irrespective of the

- 1.Ms. Shobha N Odunavar, Asst. Prof, Spl. Edn, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112, Email:Shobha.odunavar2010@gmail.com, Ph. 9739050173
- 2.Mr. P. Kamaraj, HOD-Special Education, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112

abilities, disabilities, caste, gender, socio-economic level, every child has to get education under one roof. As a supportive approach for the existing education system is Universal Design of Learning which plays very effective role. However, execution of the UDL approach at classroom level in Indian education system is insignificant. Hence, to identify the status of implementation of UDL at school level. The present study titled “*Universal Design of learning (UDL) is a means for Challenging the Exclusion*” has been carried out.

AIM

To identify the knowledge of the General Educators about Universal Design of Learning.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the theoretical knowledge of the General Educators about Universal design of Learning.
2. To identify the practical knowledge of the General Educators about Universal Design of Learning.

METHOD

Research Design: Mixed method-Convergent parallel design was followed.

Sample techniques: Random Sampling Technique was used.

Participant Criteria

Teachers working in the elementary school

Teachers who have five years of teaching experience

Teachers who have completed post-graduation along with essential teacher training course

No. of participants 17

Tool for data collection

Questionnaire was prepared to collect data qualitative and quantitatively separately.

Procedure

On the basis of the theoretical reviews, two separately questionnaire were developed to collect theoretical knowledge as well as practical knowledge about the universal design of learning. Theoretical knowledge was assessed by administering the questionnaire in quantity mode on ten participants and practical knowledge was assessed by conducting the semi-structure interview qualitative mode on seven participants. Different group of participants were taken to collect the data.

Analysis

For quantitative data statistical analysis was carried out. For qualitative data tabulating, coding and decoding was carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

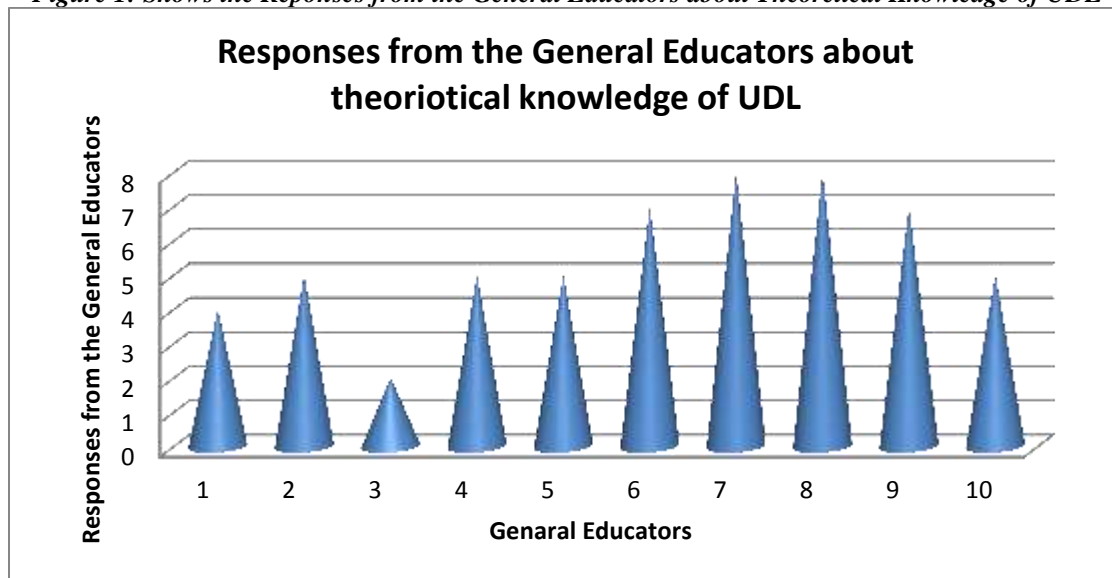
Aim and objectives of the study is to identify the knowledge (Theoretical and Practical) of the General Educators about Universal Design of Learning. Accordingly, following results were obtained. The detailed results and discussion to achieve first objective is shows below:

Table 1: Shows responses from the General Educators about theoretical knowledge of UDL

Sl. No	Age	Gender	Qualification	A. Qualification	Experience	Correct Responses
1	31	M	B.A D.Ed	--	12	4
2	41	F	PUC, TCH	MA	10	5
3	40	F	M.Sc B.Ed	Drawing	14	2
4	28	M	MA (L) D.Ed	Economics	6	5
5	56	M	B.A, B.Ed	--	20	5
6	26	M	B.Sc B. Ed	--	5	7
7	27	F	B.A D.Ed	Dip. CS	4	8
8	2	F	PUC, NST	--	12	8
9	41	F	B.Sc TCH	--	13	7
10	38	M	B.A B.Ed	--	6	5

1.Ms. Shobha N Odunavar, Asst. Prof, Spl. Edn, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112, Email:Shobha.odunavar2010@gmail.com, Ph. 9739050173

2.Mr. P. Kamaraj, HOD-Special Education, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112

Figure 1: Shows the Responses from the General Educators about Theoretical Knowledge of UDL

As it is evident from the table 1 and figure 1 that total responses from the participants were observed. It shows that out of 10 participants 8 of them given correct answers for above 50% of questions. Although, percentage of responses among them varies, only two members gave 80% of correct responses. It shows that there is an insignificant response. It may be because of UDL approach is evolving one, yet to reach most of the teacher at gross root level through in-service teacher training program. Studies shows that introducing the model to teachers presents the opportunity of expanding their academic understanding and guiding them in designing more accessible and systematic courses. A UDL-based training program was shown to improve awareness of candidate teachers in developing novel teaching approaches in terms of representing the learning content, engaging students, and assessing their understanding (Courey et al., 2012). As a consequence, all students can benefit from the variety of instructional and assessment methods and this, in turn, may lead to lesson proficiency (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, and Lundqvist, 2016). This observation shows that the theoretical knowledge among general educators about UDL is insignificant which affect the learning style of the diverse needy population of the general classroom including children with special needs.

Second objective of the study is to identify the practical knowledge about UDL among General Educators. As, data was obtained through semi-interview, it was analyzed qualitatively through coding the questions.

Table 2: Shows coding for the questions asked during interview

Sl. No	Particulars	Coding
1.	How do you plan your lesson of your specialized subject by using the Universal Design of Learning in terms of teaching strategies, methods of teaching, teaching learning materials and students involvement?	LP-UDL
2.	In what way you use the Universal design of Learning for Evaluating the Students?	E-UDL
3	Where do you use Universal Design of Learning with reference to your specialized subject other than in teaching learning process?	SS-UDL
4	Suggest the suitable technological devices or aids and appliances with reference to your specialized subject?	SS-Tech
5	Explain the procedure of enhancement of learning abilities with the help of Universal Design of Learning.	LA-UDL

NOTE: LP-UDL: Lesson plan-UDL, E-UDL: Evaluation-UDL, UDL: Specific Subject-UDL, SS-Tech: Specific Technology, LA-UDL: Learning abilities-UDL

On the bases of the coding data was categorized and analyzed according. The process of analysis was discussed below by summarizing the responses from the participants that follows the interpretation.

- Code 1 LP-UDL stands for Lesson plan-UDL Using basic teaching materials, just explained UDL, child centered teaching, active participation of children, daily life, recognize the strength and weakness.
- Code 2 E-UDL: Evaluation-UDL Activity based, CCE, using teaching aids, active participation of slow learners, and importance for slow learners.
- Code 3 UDL: Specific Subject-UDL Family environment, to find emotional challenges, understanding family members, media.

1.Ms. Shobha N Odunavar, Asst. Prof, Spl. Edn, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112, Email:Shobha.odunavar2010@gmail.com, Ph. 9739050173

2.Mr. P. Kamaraj, HOD-Special Education, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112

- Code 4 SS-Tech: Specific Technology, Models, challenges faced by students, through play, visit, computer, newspaper, science exhibition.
- Code 5 LA-UDL: Learning abilities-UDL, Smart classes, computer labs, experiment, and activity based casual aids.
 - ▣ This observation shows that the theoretical knowledge among general educators about UDL is insignificant which affect the learning style of the diverse needy population of the general classroom including children with special needs.
 - ▣ It may be because of UDL approach is evolving one, yet to reach most of the teacher at gross root level through in-service teacher training program.
 - ▣ Studies shows that introducing the model to teachers presents the opportunity of expanding their academic understanding and guiding them in designing more accessible and systematic courses.
 - ▣ When it concern to the practical aspects of UDL it is presumed that there is insignificant practice among the general educators about UDL in their class room.
 - ▣ Even though, observation says that general educators have the knowledge about technology, usage of the technology, however effective usage of technology as a part of classroom teaching for the benefit of heterogeneous group of class including special needy children is questionable.

CONCLUSION:

To conclude, several researches have given the empirical evidences that UDL approach is the suitable approach to address the diverse need of the inclusive class room including children with special needs. As a result, it can be said that 'Universal Design of learning (UDL) is a means for Challenging the Exclusion'.

However, intensive training for the general educators at pre-service and in-service level is mandatory to challenge the exclusion right from beginning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Intensive in-service training Programme on UDL for elementary general educators needs to be arranged at all the level.
- Significant importance need to be given to practical aspects of UDL in the curriculum of pre-service education program of teachers at all the level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors will acknowledge sincere thanks to the schools headmasters for permitting to approach the participants, extending thanks to participants for their valuable time and also to everybody who are directly and indirectly supporting to complete this paper.

REFERENCES

- [1] Azawei.A. A, Serenelli.F , and Lundqvist.K (2016), "Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A Content Analysis of Peer-Reviewed Journal Papers from 2012 to 2015", *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Vol. 16, No. 3, June 2016, pp. 39-56.
- [2] Cory, S. J., Tappe, P., Siker, J., & LePage, P. (2012). Improved Lesson Planning with Universal Design for Learning (UDL). *Teacher Education and Special Education*, The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children. doi:10.1177/0888406412446178
- [3] McGhie-Richmond, D., & Sung, A. N. (2012). Applying Universal Design for Learning to Instructional Lesson Planning. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 9(1), 43–59.
- [4] Anstead. J.E.M (2016), "Teachers Perceptions of Barriers to Universal Design for Learning" Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies, Walden University Scholar Works.

- 1.Ms. Shobha N Odunavar, Asst. Prof, Spl. Edn, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112, Email:Shobha.odunavar2010@gmail.com, Ph. 9739050173
- 2.Mr. P. Kamaraj, HOD-Special Education, National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603 112