

## A Study of Elementary School Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education

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Received: 05.06.2021

Accepted: 27.06.2021

### Abstract

Teachers' attitude to education is an essential pre-requisite for the success of education. A teacher needs to be professionally qualified to perform his duty as a teacher. Professional qualification shall ensure teachers' competencies in pedagogy, subject matter, and professional attitude. Inclusive education that assumes education of all types of students in the same classroom. It therefore needs not only empathy for special children but understanding their needs and organizing the school activities in such a manner that facilitates development of all children. A teacher needs to understand the provision of education of special children, enroll them, and teach them along with all other children. The child shall take part in all educational activities in class and school. Teacher shall have to coordinate with parents, counsellors, administrators, and local community. The teacher has to have positive attitude to carry out all such responsibilities competently. The present research attempts to measure the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and find out as to how educational qualifications and demographic factors have a bearing on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. It was found that teachers have moderate attitude and educational qualifications, training, and demographic factors does not have a bearing on **teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.**

**Key words:** *Inclusive education, Special children, Teachers' attitude, and Demographic variables.*

### Introduction

Education is the building block of individual, social, and national development. Therefore education of each one in the world is penecia of development. Bringing all into the fold of education and then imparting quality education at all level depends to a great extent on teachers. Teachers are the designers, implementors, evaluators, and rapporteurs of educational programs. It is imperative therefore that teacher at our schools shall be professionally competent to carry out their roles as teachers. As a teacher, it is essential that one is professionally qualified i.e., having pedagogical competencies, subject knowledge competencies, and positive attitude towards children's education. Positive attitude towards children's education is having the notion that all children have the equal right to education, they have the potential to receive education, and that they can be educated irrespective of their physical, mental, social and financial positions. It is not only realizing that education is a constitutional right but also it is humane and their rights to get quality education. It is researched and understood that inclusive education not only enhance children's cognitive

development but also promotes emotional, social, and language development among the normal as well as the non-normal (challenged) children. Further, researches proved that it is economical and promotes access to school by children in their neighborhood. However, it is also observed that many of the schools do not like to admit children with certain special needs in their schools, teachers do not like and cannot teach children with diversified needs; normal and special needs children. Although few units can be found in teacher education curriculum across the country, teachers are not professionally competent and many of them lack professional attitude towards the education of children with special needs (EADSNE, 2003). As teachers' attitude towards inclusive education play an important role for the meaningful education of children with special needs (CWSNs), here in this study an attempt has been made to study the attitude of practicing teachers at elementary schools and that will work as an eye-opener for the planners and policy makers to design professional programs for practicing teachers to develop positive attitudes towards inclusive education.

### **Concept of Inclusive education**

The basic idea of inclusive education is to educate all children in the same class irrespective of their disabilities along with the normal children. Towards the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. It presumes that the aim is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society. Hence, the emphasis on equity, which implies a concern with fairness (Ainscow M.,2018). So, fairness to all in education is the basic idea. UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2018) revealed that 263 million children in the world are out of school. These children are female, from poor family, mentally or physically disabled or HIV/AIDS diseases. Among these children, 9% of children in 6-11 age group i.e., 61 million at lower primary school, 25% of children of 12- 14 age group i.e., 63 million of upper primary school, and 33% of children of 15-17 age group i.e., 139 million of senior secondary school are out of school. It is a major challenge before the world to educate these children. Therefore, efforts are on at international and national levels to bring these children to the fold of education and making them an important part in social and national development. Any society cannot be developed if a large mass of its population is not educated, and are not contributing towards its development. The onus of this task is on teachers. Therefore, teachers are to be professionally trained to do the needful for making education inclusive. In this direction positive attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education counts much.

### **Need and Importance of Inclusive Education**

As per the European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education (2012) segregated education is still practiced and inclusive education has not yet got the momentum. In India also we have many such efforts since independence in terms of national policies and recommendations to make education accessible to all and making it inclusive. Our first effort in this direction was to make education compulsory for all and accessible to all children in the age group of 6-14 year age immediately after independence in terms of article 42 of our Constitution. The policy of making education integrated was a movement started in 1980s but the essence of inclusion was missing in that concept and making education inclusive was felt essential. As a result, the Rehabilitation Act of India, 1992, PWD Act, 1996 (Person with disability Act, 1996) was brought in by the Parliament. As school education is a state subject in the federal structure of India, lot of efforts were made by all the state governments to bring all children into the fold of education and enhance the quality of education. In this direction, The District Primary Education Project, 1994 and the Sarvashiksha Abhijan, 2002 were implemented with all seriousness and India made a remarkable progress in primary education. Further, in 2016, the PWD Act was passed as a result of the UNCWD Act, 2012. It

was realized that inclusive education is beneficial for the children with special needs and the normal children as well. It is stated by Westwoods (2018) that inclusive education has the potential for accruing the following benefits for the special children; opportunities for socialization and friendship, development of communication skills, enhancing one's independence in different areas of functioning, enhance self-esteem and self-efficacy, access to the same mainstream curriculum, enhance academic achievement, enhance expectations for social behaviour and school work, and preparation for adult life in an inclusive society.

It has also certain potential benefits for the normal children when the classroom has special children studying in the same class. The benefits for the normal children are; appreciate the individual differences, recognize, understand, respect, and accept diversity, aware that CWSN can also contribute substantially, develop positive attitude and helping skills, and with the use of extra resources and adaptive teaching methods, all students can learn.

It is also observed that when inclusive education is practiced, it is economical, collaborative, community is involved, and communication is established with community, resource persons, counsellors, and management authority. So, with the serious and integrated efforts of all the concerned people, inclusive education is proved to be beneficial for CWSNs, normal children, and the education system as a whole.

### **Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education**

Teachers at school level are the primary factor that is responsible to make education a success and that too for inclusive education. But about 10 percent teachers are untrained and those who are trained, they have no competencies and the needed attitude to make education inclusive. Our classrooms are multigrade, overcrowded, and curriculum seldom linked to real life and interests of children. As teachers are not having the needed competency and attitude, it is time to deliberate as to how the training programme can be tuned to meet the challenge. Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education can be developed only when teachers have the knowledge of the difficulties and strategies to teach such children. Only after having training inputs and teaching in the classroom having CWSNs, working with peers, parents, and counsellors, a teacher may encounter the problems of inclusion and develop positive attitude towards inclusion. If teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education, they may create a congenial school and classroom where children with special needs feel comfortable and learn. Therefore teachers attitude towards inclusive education can be comprised of teachers' knowledge of the constitutional provisions, adaptive pedagogies, different methods of evaluation, needs of CWSNs, and the liking of teachers for certain approaches towards inclusive education. Past researches revealed that teachers are not having the positive attitude towards inclusive education and that acts as a stumbling block for the success of inclusive education.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The researcher could locate seventeen studies that have studied the attitude of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in India and abroad. The studies are presented briefly and the implications are derived for the present study.

De Bettencourt (1999) surveyed teachers' beliefs about inclusion (n = 71). The five-point Likert scale included items such as 'I support mainstreaming ...', in which a higher score indicates a more positive belief. The results of the study showed that 29.9% held negative beliefs towards inclusion (Response numbers 1 and 2), whereas 40.8% held positive beliefs (Response numbers 4 and 5). The other 29.5% of the teachers showed neutral attitudes. According to the rule of thumb this means that teachers held neutral attitudes towards inclusive education.

Patrica, B. (1997) focused on the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusive education. The results concluded that the primary school teachers demonstrated mostly negative attitudes towards inclusion.

Ferris (1996) compared the attitudes of general and special secondary educators towards inclusion practices. Results showed that special educators were having significantly more positive about including students with disabilities in general classes.

Sharma (2001) conducted a study to find out the concern of school teachers about inclusive education. He selected a sample of 310 primary school principals and 484 teachers of government schools in Delhi. He found that both principals and teachers were concerned about the lack of resources like special education teachers, and instructional facilities. There was lack of sufficient funds and trained personnel to implement the inclusive education programme.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2003) stated that “inclusion largely depends on teachers’ attitudes towards learners with SEN, their view of differences in classrooms and their willingness to respond positively and effectively to those differences”. The importance of teacher attitudes actually may seem self-evident. If a teacher does not want a particular child in her classroom, it is difficult to see how any amount of extra resources or training could save the placement from being a failure. The mere existence of resources, such as knowledge or assistance, alone cannot determine the outcome. It is also necessary for the teacher to use these resources to attain a determined goal.

Parasuram (2006) reported a mean item score of 3.3 on the ‘Attitude towards Inclusive Education Scale’ (developed by Wilczenski 1992). By means of a six-point Likert scale, teachers (n = 300) indicated their extent of agreement (ranging from 6 (‘strongly agree’) to 1 (‘strongly disagree’), in which a high score indicated more favourable attitudes towards inclusive education. The mean item score of 3.3 indicated that teachers’ attitudes leaned towards Response number 3, namely ‘disagree somewhat’. Using ‘Mainstream Attitude Survey’ (MAS, developed by Bender, Vail, and Scott 1995)

Bhatnagar (2006) conducted a survey to study the concerns of school teachers in Delhi about inclusive education. A total of 470 teachers were taken as sample for the study. He found that teachers had moderate level of concern about inclusive education. Teachers were concerned about poor infrastructure facilities, financial problems, and large classroom size. It was found that teachers had negative attitude for inclusive education.

Sharma, Moore, and Sonawane (2009) conducted a study to study the concern of school teachers about inclusive education. They took a sample of 478 pre-service teachers for the study. It was found that teachers had moderate level of concern about inclusive education. They were having reservation to allow the special needs children to be seated in along with normal children in the same classroom. The teachers were more concern about the lack of trained personnel. Funds, and lack of infrastructure facilities.

DonghuaGu (2009). Studied the attitude of teachers towards the inclusion of disabled children at Kindergarten level in Beijing, China. It was a survey of 70 teachers who participated in the study. It found that kindergarten teachers had moderate level of attitude towards inclusive education. It was also found that age of teachers, teaching experience and number of children in the class has nothing to do with teachers’ attitude.

Khochan and Radford (2010) studied the attitude of teachers towards the education of CWSN and found that teachers had positive attitude towards the education of children with disabilities.

Smitha and Acharya (2010) found that teachers have unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education. They studied the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education for the disabled. The stratified random sample that consisted of 300 teachers from Kerala district was categorized into different variables as male/female teachers having above 10 years experience/ below 10 years of experience. It has been concluded that the overall attitude of the teachers towards inclusive education for the disabled was unfavorable. Significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in term of gender was

found. Male possessed more unfavorable attitude than the female teachers towards inclusive education for the disabled. Additionally, no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education having different years of professional experience (below 10 years and above 10) was found.

Hsieh W.Y. and Hsieh C.M. (2011) studied the attitude of teachers in Urban Childhood education in China by surveying 130 pre-school teachers. It was found that teachers had moderate attitude towards inclusive education. The lead teachers had more favorable attitude towards children education than the assistant teachers.

Galatereau, J. and Alexander, S.A. (2017) studied the attitude of 208 primary and secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Greece. It was found that male and female teachers were having the same level of attitude. Job-stress is related to attitude towards inclusive education, and the younger teachers were having more positive attitude towards the education of disabled.

Siloviita, T. (2018) conducted a study on teachers' attitude towards inclusion by taking a sample 1764 elementary school teachers from Finland. It was found that 20% teachers were against the system of inclusive education and only 8% were in favor of making education inclusive. It was further found that the Special teachers and subject teachers more positive attitude than the classroom teachers. Teachers work orientation and self-efficacy had low correlation with attitude towards attitude. It recommends policy change in education to make education inclusive.

Bansal S., (2018) in a study on "Attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in relation to professional commitment" studied the attitude of a randomly selected 100 teachers from five urban and five rural school of Chandigarh. The study was a descriptive survey study to find the teachers' attitude and commitment. It was found that teachers differ with respect to types of schools, educational qualifications, and experiences.

Sharma, M. (2019) studied the effect of professional training, age and experience, gender, and types of teachers on attitude of secondary school teachers and headmasters towards inclusive education. A sample of 160 teachers and 40 headmasters were selected as sample for the study. An attitude scale developed by the researcher was administered on the sample from Himachal Pradesh Government secondary school teachers. To analyse the data, t-test was used. It was found that teachers and head masters did not differ in their attitude towards inclusive education. Teachers and headmasters also did not differ in their attitude towards inclusive education as per their qualifications, experience, and gender. However, it was found that young teachers had more positive attitude than the aged teachers. It was found that teachers and headmasters had moderate level of attitude towards inclusive education.

National Education Policy (2020) has stated that teachers shall be trained professionally and be certified. Generalist teachers/subject teachers shall be trained in short term courses to have specialization to teach special children. It is essential that NCTE and RCI be endowed with the responsibility of designing such courses. It also recommended that all B.Ed. programmes shall have training program to train preservice teachers to teach the disabled children.

### **Implications from Literature**

It can be derived from the related literature that teachers' attitude is very important for the education and development of children (EADSNE, 2012 and MHRD, 2020). Most of the studies in the area of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education revealed that school teachers across globe had moderate level of attitude towards inclusive education (Parasuraman, 2006; Bhatnagar, 2006; Hsieh and Hsieh, 2011; Galatereau et al, 2011 and Sharma, 2019). However, few other studies revealed that teachers had positive attitude towards inclusive education (De Bitten Court, 1999; Ferries, 1997). Silovita (2018) also found that 20% teachers and positive attitude and the subject teachers and special education teachers of schools had positive attitude towards inclusive education than the other teachers.

But some other studies revealed that teachers of schools had negative attitude towards inclusive education (Petrica, 1997; Smitha and Achrya, 2010 and Sharma, More, and Sonawane (2009). The implication about the methodology was that all the studies were survey type of studies and attitude of teachers can be studied suitably by using survey method.

### **Rational for the study**

As teachers' attitude is essential for the success of inclusive education, it is essential to study as to what is the level of attitude possess by our teachers. Further as the reviewed studies have not enabled to conclude as to whether teachers have positive or negative attitude, it is essential to understand the attitude of our teachers form further studies. How teachers with different demographic features have developed attitude towards inclusive education is also worth investigating as few studies have been conducted and the results are inconclusive.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are attempted to be studied in this research.

- a. What is the level of attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education?
- b. How the demographic characteristics and professional training have a bearing on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education?

### **Objectives of the study**

The present study is conducted with the following objectives.

- a. To study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education
- b. To find out as to how demographic characteristics and professional training have a bearing on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

The study is conducted with the following Null hypotheses to be tested.

- a. There exists no difference in the attitude of male and female school teachers towards inclusive education.
- b. There exists no difference in the attitude of Private and Government school teachers towards inclusive education
- c. There exists no difference in the attitude of Trained and Untrained school teachers towards inclusive education
- d. There exists no difference in the attitude of rural and urban school teachers towards inclusive education
- e. There exists no difference in the attitude of Experienced and novice school teachers towards inclusive education

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study was conducted by using survey method. To achieve the objectives and test the stated null hypotheses, the researchers developed a Likert scale to measure attitude of teachers towards inclusive education at elementary level. The scale was developed by developing statements on attitude towards inclusive education. Such statements were about Constitutional provisions, facilities at school, education of disabled, SCs and STs, economically backwards, physically challenged and the pedagogical strategies for inclusive education. The items were validated by taking into consideration experts' judgement. The final scale has 26 items and the reliability of the scale was estimated by testing and retesting it on a sample of elementary school teachers and the correlation was found to be 0.78 which is significant at 0.01 level. The validated scale was personally administered on a randomly selected sample of 40 elementary school teachers from Baroda district. The scores obtained by the teachers on the attitude scale was calculated. The scores obtained in the scale was analysed by calculating Means and SDs, and t-test to find out the level of teachers' attitude and the bearing of demographic variables and professional training on attitude of teacher. The details of the analysis and interpretation are presented below.

### Analysis and Interpretation of data

The data collected have been presented here below about the attitude of teachers and as per the demographic variables bearing on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

#### a. Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

To find out the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education, Mean and standard deviation was calculated from the data that is presented below.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the Attitude scores obtained by teachers towards Inclusive Education

Class Interval	Frequency
80-84	2
85-89	1
90-94	10
95-99	9
100-104	10
105-109	7
110-111	1
N	40
Mean	98.125
SD	6.9

In the attitude scale having 26 items, the minimum to maximum score can be 1 to 130. As score 3 presents the neutral point, the scale is divided in to three sections. The first section is from 1 to 65 represents negative attitude, 66 to 91 as moderate attitude, and 92 to 130 as positive attitude. As the calculated Mean value from the obtained scores is 98.125, it can be said that elementary school teachers possess positive attitude towards inclusive education. But it can be observed that it is not very highly positive. The Sd value of 6.9 represents that the teachers are very much heterogenous in terms of their attitude that is all teachers are not having positive attitude.

An item-wise analysis revealed that teachers were having negative attitude towards the education of hyper active/attention deficit children, disabled, STs and SCs children. They feel that their workload is increased by these children. The teachers at the same time are positive about the inclusive education as they viewed that inclusive education is viable, all types of children can be taught in the same class, and it benefits all children. They feel that it is not a political agenda rather it is a social responsibility.

#### b. Bearing on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

To study the bearing of certain variables; gender, school types, Professional training, demography, and experience of teaching on attitude of teachers towards inclusive education, the data were categorized and t-values were calculated. The five Null hypotheses were tested and the details are presented in table below.

Table 2: t-tests for Demographic variables and Professional training to see their bearing on attitude

Sr. No.	Variables	Sample size	Mean	SD	SED <sub>M</sub>	t-value
1. Gender	Male	20	96.70	7.5	1.8	1.58
	Female	20	99.55	6.34		
2. Types of School	Private	15	96.87	6.2	4.1	0.49
	Government	25	98.88	7.20		
3. Professional training	Professionally Trained	30	98.94	7.24	1.96	1.70

	Professionally untrained	10	95.60	4.33		
4. Experience	Experienced	31	97.10	6.19	3.04	1.50
	Un-experienced	9	101.67	8.2		
5. Demography	Rural	10	94.1	6.65	2.53	2.11*
	Urban	20	99.46	6.6		

Note: Table value at 0.05 level= 2.04, and at 0.01 = 2.70 with df=38

\*Denotes significant at 0.05 level of significance

The calculated t-values in the last column of the table present the fact that there exists no difference in the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in terms of gender, types of school, Professional training, and years of teaching experience. However, the last row entry in the last column reveals that the t-value 2.11 is found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance and it can be concluded that the rural school teachers have low attitude towards inclusive education than the urban school teachers. It can be stated that the  $H_0$ ; a,b, c, and e are accepted and the  $H_0$ -d is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

### Conclusion

Teachers' attitude plays an important role in the education of children and to make any programme a success. The present study reveals that teachers of elementary schools have positive attitude towards inclusive education. However, it was also found that teachers view the education of disabled, SCs, and STs, and hyper active as a burden to them as education of the Special children is a social responsibility and not a political agenda. It was further found that teachers do not differ in their attitude level in terms of gender, professional training, teaching experience, and types of schools. But the rural teachers were found to have low attitude towards inclusive education. It can be implied that teachers mostly have positive attitude towards inclusive education and they need to be taken care of for their workload, support and facilities.

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