



Study of Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusion in Schools

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perspectives held by primary school educators towards the inclusive education system. The sample for the research consisted of fifty primary school teachers, with an equal gender distribution (twenty-five male and twenty-five female). These fifty instructors were drawn from a variety of schools in SBS Nagar that were associated with the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB). The Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale, or ATIES, was established by Wilczenski in 1992 and was used to gather the data. The major purpose of this research was to investigate the perspectives of educators on the inclusion of kids with special needs into conventional classroom settings. The following conclusions drawn from the findings of the study: i) The attitudes of male and female educators towards inclusive education did not vary significantly from one another. ii) When compared primary teachers who had more than five years of teaching experience with less experience teachers, primary teachers who had less than five years of teaching experience had more positive views towards inclusive education.

Keywords: Teachers attitude, inclusive education

Introduction

Education constitutes the transformative process that empowers individuals to realize their full potential and equips them with the competencies necessary for active participation in society. It entails the acquisition and cultivation of knowledge and skills through pedagogical methods and educational experiences. The efficacy of teaching is a pivotal factor in the educational process, given that the outcomes of teaching, encompassing the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, are intrinsically linked to the effectiveness of the teacher.

According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education signifies a concerted effort to enhance the capacity of the educational system to cater to the diverse needs of all learners. Inclusive education is characterized by the placement of all children, irrespective of their ability levels, in mainstream classrooms or the most appropriate and least restrictive environments, where every student is treated equally, necessitating the adaptation of curricula and teaching approaches to benefit all.

Integration is often mistaken for inclusion as it involves placing students in regular classrooms, which can be seen as an initial step towards inclusivity. However, integration falls short of genuine inclusion if it lacks a paradigm shift within the school, neglects to treat students as equals, and fails to adapt the curriculum for the benefit of all students.

Inclusive education demands a comprehensive overhaul of school culture, policies, and practices to accommodate and respond to the diverse array of students within their community. This transformation hinges on fostering positive attitudes toward students with disabilities among all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and fellow students. Its objective is to unite all students within the same classroom and community, regardless of their individual strengths or weaknesses in a given area, thereby striving to maximize the potential of each student. The educational requirements of marginalized learners significantly differ from those of their mainstream peers. Mainstream educators must possess the appropriate attitudes, knowledge, and skills to effectively engage with diverse learners in inclusive settings.

Inclusive education marks a shift towards adapting educational environments to address specific educational needs rather than seeking to assimilate children with disabilities into predetermined educational settings. Inclusion is the effort to ensure the diversity of learners, encompassing those with disabilities, varying languages and cultures, diverse family backgrounds, unique interests, and distinct learning styles. It guarantees that children, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, will participate in mainstream education.



Inclusive education entails embracing all children without discrimination, helping them into regular schools or mainstream environments. Inclusion surpasses the mere placement of students with disabilities into regular classrooms; it acknowledges that all children have individual needs, and teachers are equipped to facilitate inclusive classrooms that cater to the diverse requirements of each child.

The formulation of inclusive classrooms requires educators to consider the needs of all students, including those with special educational requirements, during the planning process. It demands a comprehensive approach that takes into account the unique needs of all students (Tomlinson, 1996).

While scholars have different definitions of inclusive education, all motivated by the need to address the educational needs of children with a range of abilities. According to UNESCO (1994), inclusive schools are places where all students work together to learn while getting a top-notch education and support via appropriate curriculum, organisational structures, teaching approaches, resource utilisation, and community linkages.

Numerous studies highlight the significance that attitudes held by teachers have in enabling the effective integration of children with special needs into regular classroom settings. Research conducted by Barber and Turner (2007) evaluated the mind sets of young teachers working in primary schools. They discovered that instructors just starting out in their professions had a solid theoretical knowledge base, which contributes to their increased effectiveness. They also exhibit a willingness to participate in further training as necessary. In a similar study, Forlin, Keen, and Barrett (2008) found that younger and less experienced instructors had a larger inclination for applying inclusive practises, while their more experienced counterparts express heightened worries about the practical implementation of inclusive education. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown that younger and less experienced teachers are more likely to implement inclusive practises. Subsequent research (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014) has shown that younger and less experienced educators have a tendency to have more favourable views towards inclusion.

A proficient teacher must maintain a favorable attitude towards all types of students. The impact of a teacher's attitude on student enrollment and their educational development is significant. An inspired teacher leaves an enduring imprint on a student's psyche, not only in terms of knowledge and skills imparted but also in the instillation of values and professional pride. This inspiration also encourages students to consider teaching as a noble profession (Kilyva, 2014). With this in mind, a study was conducted to assess primary school teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children into mainstream education.

Objective of the Study:

To explore the attitude of primary school teachers towards the inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms w.r.t. i) gender ii) teaching experience

Hypotheses:

1. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards inclusive education.
2. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of teachers having less teaching experience ('less than 5 years') and teachers having more teaching experience ('more than 5 years') towards inclusive education.

Delimitations of the Study:

- The study was delimited to the primary school teachers of SBS Nagar only.
- The study was confined to only 50 teachers only.

Tool used:

To assess the attitudes of teachers, the study utilized the "Attitudes toward Inclusive Education Scale" (ATIES) created by Wilzenski in 1992. This instrument comprises 16 items, with each item employing a 7-point scale to gauge teachers' attitudes. A higher score on the scale is indicative of a more positive attitude of teachers towards the inclusive education system.

Methodology:

The present investigation is characterized as a descriptive survey research study. The data was gathered from a sample of 50 primary school teachers, selected randomly from various primary schools in SBS Nagar affiliated with PSEB, Mohali. In the process of selecting these teachers, gender balance was maintained by including an equal number of male and female teachers in



the sample. A comparative analysis was conducted to examine variations in attitudes toward inclusive education between these two groups, taking into account variables such as gender and teaching experience. Subsequently, the findings were derived based on the responses provided by the participants.

Statistical Techniques used

Following the data collection, it was organized into tabular format to facilitate the analysis process. For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, measures of central tendency (such as the arithmetic mean) and standard deviation were employed. Additionally, t-ratios were calculated to assess the presence of significant differences in the data.

Results and Conclusions:

As per the information provided by the respondents, the following results and conclusions have been derived:

Hypothesis 1

To assess the first hypothesis, a t-test was employed to ascertain whether there is a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female teachers regarding inclusive education.

Table 1 showing t ratio of female and male teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

Variable: Gender	N	M	S.D.	t-ratio
Female	25	75.08	10.97	1.07*
Male	25	71.12	14.91	

*Non- significant at 0.05 level of significance, df 48

The results of this comparison are shown in Table 1, which shows that the mean scores for female instructors come in at 75.08, while the mean scores for male teachers come in at 71.12. When compared to female instructors, male teachers have a standard deviation (SD) of 14.91, while female teachers have an SD of 10.97. It is essential to take into consideration the fact that a higher mean score implies a more favourable attitude among instructors about the inclusive education system. At a significance level of 0.05, it was discovered that the t-value that was computed was lower than the crucial value that was tabled. This would seem to imply that there is not a substantial difference in the views held by male and female educators. As a consequence of this, the null hypothesis, which asserts that there is no significant difference in the attitude held by male and female educators in regard to inclusive education is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

To examine the second hypothesis, a t-test was conducted to establish whether a statistically significant difference exists in the attitudes of teachers with varying levels of teaching experience (i.e., less than 5 years and more than 5 years) regarding inclusive education.

Table 2 showing t- ratio of attitude towards inclusive education of variable teaching experience

Variable: Teaching Experience	N	M	S.D.	t-ratio
Experience less than 5 years	16	71.93	12.90	3.03*
Experience more than 5 years	34	63.73	10.29	

Significant at 0.01 level of significance, df 48

According to the data shown in Table 2, the mean score of educators with less than five years of classroom experience (defined as "less than 5" years) is 71.93, whereas the mean score of educators with more than five years of classroom experience (defined as "more than 5" years) is 63.73. The standard deviation for instructors with less experience is 12.90, while the standard deviation for instructors with more experience is 10.29. It is important to note that a higher mean score indicates that instructors have a more favourable attitude towards the inclusive education system. At a significance level of 0.01, it was discovered that the estimated t-value was higher than the value that was found in the table. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the attitudes (perspectives) held by primary instructors with less experience and those with more experience. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the attitudes that teachers with less teaching experience ('less than 5 years') and teachers with more teaching experience ('more than 5 years') towards inclusive education was therefore rejected.



Suggestion:

In this empirical research, the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusive education were studied. Within the context of an educational system that is able to generate particular circumstances for successful practises in this area, teachers' perspectives on inclusive education are moulded and nourished throughout the course of their professional development. It is advised that orientation programmes be established, in which instructors are provided with knowledge regarding inclusive education. This may contribute to the development of better relationships between teachers and students. In addition, there should be a larger emphasis placed on teaching future teachers to appreciate the varied capabilities and potential of students. This would enable them to build the required learning environment to fulfil the requirements of all students.

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